

A STUDY OF ST. VINCENT ALUMNAE

Portland, Oregon

IX

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SEMINAR IN NURSING

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1. COMMUNITY NEED FOR NURSING:

- (a) Survey of early Medical History of Oregon;
- (b) Historical sketch of Order of Sisters of Charity of Providence with relation to Oregon Pioneer History;
- (c) History of Founding of St. Vincent Hospital.

11. SCHOOL OF NURSING:

- (a) Narrative sketch of first graduates, including the first class;
- (b) Growth of School to the present;
- (c)

111. ALUMNAE:

- (a) Outline sketch of Nurses Alumnae;
- (b) St. Vincent Alumnae, history;
- (c) Relationship between Alumnae and
 - 1. School of Nursing,
 - 2. Hospital.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. COMMUNITY NEED FOR NURSING:

- 1.
2. The Institute of Providence, Ex-Mother General of the Order;
3. Pioneer Catholic History of Oregon, O'Hara;
4. Oregonians;
5. Catholic Sentinels.

11. SCHOOL OF NURSING:

- (A)
1. Nurses, Patients, & Pocketbooks, May Ayres Burgess;
 2. History of Nursing, Nutting & Dock;
 3. Oregonians of 1889, 1900,
 4. U.S. Census Statistics;
 5. A History of California, The Spanish Period, by Chapman;
 6. History of Oregon, Carey;
 7. History of Columbia River Valley, The Dalles to the Sea by Fred Locksley;
 8. Bancroft's Works, Vols. Oregon, Washington, & California

(B) INTERVIEWS:


1. Trip to Seattle, Washington to interview:
 - (a) Sister Andrew, first Supt. of Nurses;
 - (b) " Irene, ex-local superior;
2. Mrs. Anna Hinkle (sister of Agnes Johnston);
3. Mrs. Rose Philpot;
4. Miss Rebecca McDowell;
5. Mrs. Anna Schosser;
6. Sister Constance at Vancouver, Washington (Sarah Hough).

(C) Letters:

1. Bellevue Alumnae secretary, regarding Theresa Cox;
2. Lettie Fonseca, King City, California (for Ray and Eleanor Fonseca).

3. Seminar.

111. ALUMNAE:

1. Letter to American Nurses Association.
 2. St.Vincent Alumnae Records.
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The Civil War was the impetus that started the interest in professional nursing in the United States. Before this time little thought had been given to secular nursing; in fact the Florence Nightingale School at St. Thomas' Hospital, London, which is considered the nucleus of our present day system of nursing, was only opened on June 15, 1860. There is a record (1, pp. 34) that the Woman's Hospital in Philadelphia started its nursing education in 1861. However, it was during the reconstruction period following the war that the old almshouse infirmary idea gave way to the more advanced idea of nursing the sick, and with the change came the establishing of training schools for nurses. In this movement Bellevue Hospital in New York City was among the first, for in 1873 the school was opened; and after this time we find the Bellevue graduates in various parts of the country initiating the new order of skilled nursing in hospitals.

It was in September 1889, that Theresa Cox, a then recent graduate of Bellevue Hospital, came to Portland at the request of our Sisters to instruct them in the new nursing procedures and surgical technique. She brought with her the first edition of Clara Weeks' "Textbook of Nursing" and a "Materia Medica" for class work, and from all accounts she was a thorough and exacting teacher. It is worthy of note to state here that Clara Weeks, a graduate of the New York Hospital, was the first nurse in the United States to write a Textbook of Nursing (2, Vol. 3, pp. 119), and the first copyright is

date 1885 by D.Appleton & Co. Before this time medical books were used in a reference way; but these often lacked the essential practical procedures that were most vital to a nurse's work, or they were too technical to be readily understood by nurses.

Besides the class work, the personal supervision of operating-room technique, and bedside demonstration work given by Miss Cox, the first class of Sisters attended lectures given by members of the hospital staff. Of these early lectures there are no records, but from verbal accounts Miss Cox was consulted and the lectures were prepared with reference to the students needs and the standards set by Bellevue Hospital. Anatomy and physiology were not taught as separate subjects, but such knowledge as was considered necessary was incorporated into the lectures.

Surgery was the topic of the day in Portland Medical circles at the time, and on the staff of St.Vincent Hospital were a number of young men who later distinguished themselves as surgeons. The subject was a large and important one, and Dr. Kenneth A.J. Mackenzie and Dr.William Jones were chosen to lecture to the class upon the surgical care of patients. Dr. James F.Bell, who devoted his life to the study of internal medicine, gave a comprehensive course of lectures upon the nursing of medical patients. Dr.Ernest F.Tucker's choice was gynecology, and the students speak of him as an exacting teacher but generous of time and interest. Dr.Andrew C.Smith, the youngest member on the staff, lectured upon obstetrics, altho he was more interested in surgery than obstetrics. However, at that time the

obstetrician as a specialist was unknown in Portland, since medicine was still practised along the general practitioner lines.

At the end of the year oral examinations were given the Sisters in both class and lecture work. One member of the class asked for a diploma, but Miss Cox did not consider a diploma necessary for the Sisters. In those days a diploma was given to lay nurses only by hospitals, and it was a reward for time spent in the hospital rather than for educational accomplishment. After Sister Andrew became Superintendent of Nurses' she did receive her diploma from the hospital.

Sometime in the fall of 1890, Miss Cox returned to New York City. Mother Theresa had asked her to remain and continue the work of the training school, but it seems she missed the association of the New York nurses. One must be reminded that she was probably the only graduate nurse in Portland at the time, and Portland was but a small town.

The students in this class were all experienced hospital workers before Miss Cox came to instruct them in the theory of nursing, and it is with a feeling of greatest pride that we record their names here: Sister Irene, Sister Andrew, Sister Cyril, Sister Cleophas, Sister Fortunita, and Sister Mary Bonsecours. Sister Irene was the local superior at St. Vincent Hospital on the Hill for many years, and she came to old St. Vincent's in 1882; Sister Andrew, the first superintendent of nurses, has been actively in hospital work since her arrival in Portland in 1880; Sister Cyril, the greatest bedside instructor of nurses in both surgical and contagious work that St. Vincent's has ever had, was for many years in charge of St. Vincent

Sanatorium, the old contagious department of the hospital.

To retrospect for the moment is to marvel at the forethought and intelligence of these early pioneers in the nursing history of our school. The first schools of nursing connected with religious orders were opened by the Sisters of Mercy in Chicago and the Sisters of St. Mary's in Brooklyn in 1889(2, Vol. 3, PP. 187), and at the same time the Sisters of Providence in Portland were preparing to open their training school.

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1. Nurses, Patients, & Pocketbooks, May Ayres Burgess.
2. A History of Nursing, Nutting & Dock.

ROSE PHILPOT RECEIVES FIRST DIPLOMA

The possibility of opening a Training School for Nurses in connection with the hospital was first discussed by the Sisters and members of the Visiting Staff in the early part of 1886. At that time Rose Philpot was selected to go to New York to take the two-year course in nursing offered by Bellevue Hospital. Mother Theresa made arrangements for her to enter the school in September, but sometime during the summer Mrs. Philpot decided not to accept the offer. Since she did not intend to nurse in homes, she felt that a diploma was not absolutely necessary; then New York was a long way from Portland, and an untimely seizure of "maladie du pays" seems also to have influenced her decision. There was no one available to send in Mrs. Philpot's place, so the plan was abandoned.

In view of the advancement made in nursing education at St. Vincent's in the last few years, a brief account of the course of instruction given a pupil nurse forty-five years ago will surely be of interest. Had Mrs. Philpot gone to Bellevue, she would probably have received the same instruction that was given Miss Cox, who graduated in 1885; for it is quite unlikely that any change was made in the curriculum in a year's time. After studying this outline, we must admit that Mrs. Philpot would have returned home a well trained nurse.

Medical and Uterine.....	8 months
Surgical.....	5 "
Head Nurse Duty.....	6 "
Private Cases.....	1 month
Insane Asylum.....	1 "
Erysipelas.....	1 "
Emergency.....	1 "

In addition to this practical work classes were held, and

the doctors lectured on the following subjects:

Surgical.....	5 hours
Diseases.....	6 "
Fluids of the body.....	5 "
Obstetrics.....	4 "

Since the students of the first class do not recall a lecture course on "fluids of the body", evidently the term was obsolete by the time nursing education became a part of the activities of St. Vincent Hospital.

Rose Philpot came to the hospital in January 1880. A woman of high intelligence with a natural aptitude for nursing, she immediately became a part of the regime of the hospital. The Staff members recognizing her ability took it upon themselves to become her teachers. Dr. K.A.J. Mackenzie, Drs. Henry E. and William Jones, and later Dr. A.C. Smith were especially responsible for much of the splendid work she did before the advent of the Training School. For fifteen years she did general floor duty at the old hospital, and during the greater part of this time she had complete charge of all the obstetrical work. In the days before the telephone this was a very responsible task. At night a man was sent for the doctor, and often he returned without him. In fact it was a frequent occurrence for him to arrive at the doctor's home to find him on another call. Then as he trudged along the wooden sidewalks, swinging his lantern, he would lose his way, and quite chagrined he would return to the hospital to tell Mrs. Philpot that he could not find the doctor. And quite as often she sent him back to the doctor's home with the message that Mrs. Population had been delivered and everything was all right.

When Theresa Cox came to instruct the Sisters in 1889, Mrs. Philpot also attended the classes and lectures. With the opening of the Training School, she was assigned to teach the students practical obstetrics. Every one realized that she should be a graduate nurse in order to teach student nurses. Then the question arose as to the two-year requirement for graduation. She might have been given a diploma to satisfy the teaching need, for no *one* doubted her knowledge of the practical procedures of obstetrics; but Mrs. Philpot was a lay person, and she might decide to leave the hospital to take up private duty work. After considerable discussion on the subject, Dr. Mackenzie asked her to take another year of class and lecture work to fill the requirement, and her friends among the Staff members persuaded her to do this. Dr. William Jones told her that the students could never hope to get from lectures and classes the knowledge of nursing that she already had acquired from her many years of practical experience. By way of encouragement, Dr. Wellington H. Boyd gave her the latest medical book on obstetrics. Mrs. Philpot studied for another year, took an oral examination in each subject, and on June 9, 1893 received her diploma, the first diploma given by St. Vincent Hospital.

Shortly before the Golden Jubilee in 1925, Sister Gaudentia, then Superior of St. Vincent Hospital, came to Mrs. Philpot for some information about the old hospital. In the course of their conversation, Mrs. Philpot showed Sister Gaudentia her diploma, remarking that it was so out-of-date she thought she would put it in the incinerator. Sister Gaudentia persuaded her not to burn it, and sent one of the Alumnae members to talk to her. As a final result of this conversation, Mrs. Philpot gave her diploma to the Alumnae Association. It was framed and hung in the lecture hall of the Nurses Home, yet few have given it

more than a passing glance. It is not only of value because it is the first diploma given by the hospital, but it is an artistic piece of work that might even now be classed as an antique. It is handwritten- -italicized, and it has the red wax seal, which is not found on the later diplomas. This diploma is the work of Sister Mary Olive, who was the teacher of Art and Music at Providence Academy, Vancouver, Washington, when Mrs. Philpot graduated. The wording, too, is different on this diploma, for it reads: "This is to Certify, That Mrs. Rose Philpot has been a nurse at St. Vincent's Hospital for the last thirteen years; that she has there received a thorough course of instruction in medical and surgical nursing; and that she is trained in the antiseptic system of nursing. In Witness Whereof, are affixed the seal of the Hospital and the signatures of the Mother Provincial, the Sister Superior, and the members of the Visiting Staff on the 9th day of June 1893. The signatures are as follows:

Sister Mary Conrad, Superior
Henry E. Jones, M.D.
William Jones, M.D.
Kenneth A.J. Mackenzie, M.D.L.R.C.P.
James F. Bell, M.D.L.R.C.P. London
Andrew C. Smith, M.D.
Mayes Case, M.D.

Quite of interest, too, is the fact that the Intern, Mayes Case, also signed Mrs. Philpot's diploma. Dr. Case has the distinction of being the first Intern at St. Vincent Hospital.