

HISTORY OF NURSING DISPLAY

Dedicated to **Lois Blais 1938-2008**

Lois Blais was a passionate historian and a dedicated member of the B.C. History of Nursing Group. Lois served as the group treasurer and as the chair of the Archive Committee. Her work to build the archives collection is deeply appreciated by the nursing history group. In this picture, Lois is dressed as Florence Nightingale



Pageant of Nursing History

A historical presentation of portrait dolls revealing the origins and social significance of nursing costumes

Study of clothing throughout the centuries provides a wealth of valuable historical data. Research into women's dress, for example, reveals subjugation of women and their struggles for independence and empowerment. Costumed dolls are a significant kind of historical research into dress and clothing. The costumed doll, sometimes called the portrait doll, has existed for thousands of years and has survived to provide historical background and facts. They provide details on images, style, fabrics and customs.

This presentation was developed by Sheila J. Rankin Zerr and Glennis Zilm. The portrait dolls were designed and dressed by Sheila and the script was developed by Glennis.



Ancient Civilizations (circa 4000 to 100 BC)

Records indicate there was a form of medical practice and the orderly care of the sick in temples by caretakers (early “nurses”) under the direction of priest-physicians in ancient Egypt.

The roots of public sanitation and some laws governing health care developed in ancient Rome and early Babylon. Earlier references have been found in Egyptian papyri for medical and surgical treatment and dietary regimes for daily care of patients under the direction of trained attendants. In Greece, there were the beginnings of hospitals or “sanatoria.” For example, Aesculapius (circa 1134 BC) and his daughters Hygeia, Panacea, and Mediterina were famous for their healing and cures.



Influence of Christianity

(circa 1 to 500 AD)

Fabiola, who died about 399, was a Roman matron converted to Christianity. She dressed in sackcloth and went into the city streets to minister to the poor and sick. She is credited with founding the first public Christian hospital.

The highly developed Roman Empire was flourishing and its trade routes had spread throughout Europe and to the British Isles. Influenced by the teachings of the Greek Hippocrates, the Romans had developed some public health principles and state hospitals were established for the soldiers and gladiators. During this time, Christianity became established and spread, based on the fundamental elements of Christ's teaching including love and service for all humanity.



Medieval Hospitals and Monastic Nurses (circa 500 to 1500)

Under the auspices of the Roman Catholic Church, the religious orders grew and began to establish larger and more specialized hospitals, such as the Hôtel Dieu in Lyons, France, which was founded in 542. This costume, that of a nun of this order, circa 1443.

After the fall of the Roman Empire, during the “Dark Ages,” epidemics and plagues (e.g., the “Black Death”) flourished. Care of the sick, and particularly care of the sick poor, was carried out by nuns and monks, who often developed herbal treatments and exchanged knowledge and medical lore. The influences of Christianity and the religious orders shaped the early development of health care in Europe and Great Britain.



Knight Hospitaller (circa 1096 - 1600)

Male military nursing orders began to appear during the Crusades, combining attributes of religion, chivalry, and militarism . One order, the **Knight Hospitallers of St. John of Jerusalem** established several great hospitals in Europe.

During the Crusades, groups of knight crusaders from Europe and Britain attempted to reclaim the “holy land,” and during their pilgrimages and wars established hospitals throughout the Middle East and Europe to care for the sick and wounded.

During this time, medicine established educational patterns in centres of learning outside the Church and within the developing universities. By the time of the Renaissance, medicine had largely separated from the Church, although nursing largely remained within its confines.



Early Nursing in Canada (1617 - 1800)

Jeanne Mance (1606 - 1673), nurse and hospital administrator extraordinaire, has earned a special place in the history of Canadian nursing as co-founder of the city of Ville-Marie (now Montréal).

Provided with funds to establish a hospital in New France, Jeanne Mance ventured to the new world in 1642. Educated in a convent, she learned the basics of nursing there and soon brought out more lay nurses to help care for the settlers. Her hospital was not a religious hospital.

Earlier, Marie Hébert had arrived with her apothecary husband and the first French settlers in 1617. Soon widowed, she became a lay nurse and provided care both in her home and as a visiting nurse. The first hospital in what is now Canada was established in Quebec City by three Augustinian Sisters in 1639. These nuns provided care for the Indians as well as the settlers. Typhoid and cholera were rampant in the early days.



Establishment of Nursing in Canada (1700s - Early 1800s)

Marguerite d'Youville (1701-1771) was the founder of the Canadian Order of the Sisters of Charity – commonly called the “Grey Nuns.” Born in Montreal, she began a program of visiting nursing in the city soon after she was widowed.

She and other like-minded women soon approached the Roman Catholic Church for sanction and in 1737 became a non-cloistered order specializing in health care in the community. Later, at the request of the city, these women also took over and reformed the decrepit Montreal City Hospital.

The Order grew and sent Sisters to many developing communities across Canada. They are credited with bringing the first nursing care to Western Canada with a delegation of four Sisters to St. Boniface in Winnipeg in 1844.



Dark Ages of Nursing in England (1600s - 1860s)

Sairy Gamp, a character in a Charles Dickens' novel *Martin Chuzzlewit*, has come to symbolize (perhaps unfairly) the dark ages of nursing in England.

Because England had broken with the Roman Catholic Church (so Henry VIII could obtain his divorce), the monasteries and convents – and with them their attendant hospitals – were closed. With few exceptions, there was almost no education for caregivers.

Hospitals were death houses, and disease in the crowded poorer sections of cities such as London was rampant. Only the poorest type of woman – those too poor to carry out any other work – was drawn to become a nurse. Dressed in cast-off finery supposedly stolen from dying patients, these women represented the worst in nursing – and the need for reform.



Florence Nightingale (1820 - 1910)

Florence Nightingale, daughter of a wealthy and powerful family, wanted to become a nurse, recognizing from an early age that sick people needed better care. Well-educated and well-traveled, she knew of the better conditions in Europe.

Despite opposition from her family, she studied with a group of lay deaconesses in Kaiserswerth, and returned to London to open a model hospital for “retired gentlewomen.” As Britain was soon involved in a dreadful war in Crimea, she volunteered to take a group of nurses to improve care in the war zone – with great success. She was honored and decorated for her efforts, and was glorified in a poem by Tennyson called “*The Lady of the Lamp*.”

She continued her work to improve health care through introduction of sound nursing. She backed the opening of a model school for nurses at St. Thomas’ Hospital, which became the standard for nursing education throughout the world.



Early Schools of Nursing (1874 - 1895)

The first of the “Nightingale schools” for nurses in Canada – the Mack School for Nurses – was established in 1874 at St. Catharines, Ontario. A few schools in the United States predated this.

Students in the schools quickly adopted the use of uniforms and caps, such as this one from about the early 1890s. Uniforms were based on the fashions of the day, and were considered a mark of the professional.



University Education for Nurses (1919 forward)

University Education for Nurses was introduced in Canada in 1919 when the University of British Columbia opened the first degree program. Ethel Johns, a nursing pioneer of international stature, was the first director of the UBC School.

The introduction of the degree program was an attempt to have nursing education controlled by educational authorities, rather than have it based on an apprenticeship work program. During the 1990s, some provinces in Canada have adopted the baccalaureate program as the basis for entry to practice, as recommended by the Canadian Nurses Association.

The costume shown is a graduation gown of the University of Ottawa in the 1960s.



Victorian Order of Nurses (1897 forward)

The Victorian Order of Nurses was established in 1897 under the auspices of Lady Aberdeen, wife of Canada's Governor General. The order was set up to bring community nursing to small Canadian communities where there was no form of health care.

Community nursing in Canada dates back a long way, but the establishment of the VON brought nurses to remote communities. The VON marks a special kind of volunteer organization in Canada, where fund raising was conducted to introduce services; these were offered until the community could establish its own services. The records of VON services in outpost communities – and similarly nursing services offered by the Red Cross – show extraordinary nursing in the field.

The uniform shown is that of the mid-1960s.



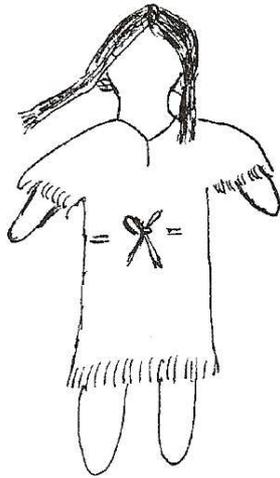
Hospital Nursing (1800s to present)

Although nurses work in many settings, bedside nursing in hospitals remains the main venue for nursing practice. However, nursing today is more open to a wide variety of cultures and religious back-grounds than in the past. As well, Canadian nurses today need to offer appropriate care to a wide range of cultural backgrounds.

After the introduction of the Nightingale model of nursing education, nursing was carried out mainly by young women. Hospital schools of nursing generally required students to live in residences and to live strictly chaperoned lives. Transfer of basic RN educational programs from hospitals to colleges began in the 1960s and 1970s. Traditional hospital uniforms and the traditional caps slowly began to be replaced with more casual and utilitarian forms of clothing.

This costume represents a graduation dress of the Ottawa General Hospital of 1966.

First Nations Nursing



Before the arrival of European settlers, nursing care in Canada's Aboriginal peoples was mainly carried on within the family with interventions by shamans and healers (both men and women).

First Nations people generally followed healthy lifestyles, but were well versed in herbal care. Many treatments carried out by early European nurses in New France were based on information learned from First Nations healers – such as the use of Spruce bark and root teas in the treatment of scurvy.

The reproduction in this display is an authentic Bonnechere (Ontario) Algonquin doll figure. These were often given to sick children, along with incantations and rituals, to help in the healing process.

Military Nursing



Military Nursing in Canada gained its first recognition at the time of the North West Rebellion in 1885. The uniform was the simple dress, apron and cap. The true pioneers in military nursing were the devoted nuns of various religious orders who cared for the casualties of the battle, regardless of race, creed, colour or religion beginning with the French and English battles and the aboriginal people of Canada. Canadian nurses served in South Africa (Boer) War of 1899 where the first professionally trained nurse volunteers signed up for service with the Canadian Regiments.

Uniforms for nurses had been established in 1899 and the nurses wore the distinctive grey dress, apron, veil or cap and cape.

In WW I thousands of Canadian nurses signed up for military service with the Overseas Military Services of Canada. Nurses wore the distinctive Canadian Army Medical Corps street uniform. It is believed that nurses serving in WW I front lines set the trends in having hemlines raised in the coming 1920s as it was necessary to raise their unworkable floor length hemlines out of the mud of the trenches.

In WW II Canadian nurses were among the first to be sent overseas. Nurses of the Royal Canadian Army Medical Corps were granted the rank of officer and were issued regulation uniforms for the many duties they performed. The dress uniform was the traditional blue under dress, apron, veil, cape, and belt with the identifying buckle. The hemline was much shorter than in WW I.



Modern Nursing

Today's nurses wear comfortable clothing suited to demanding and busy roles. More men are entering the profession compared with less than 1% of new students in 1966.



The development of Nurses' Unions since the 1960s has been an important trend in nursing, as has the introduction of multicultural and holistic nursing. Current issues relate to expanded roles for nurses and a greater involvement of nurses in the development of health care policy.