

# HISTORY OF NURSING NEWS

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MARCH 2004

## IN MEMORY OF ESTHER PAULSON 1906-2004

By Ethel Warbinek

The History Group lost a dear friend, Esther Paulson, who died on January 2, 2004. She often referred to us as her "family".

Esther Irene Paulson was born in New Westminster in 1906, daughter of pioneer Swedish parents. She graduated from the Royal Columbian Hospital School of Nursing in 1928 and worked as a private duty nurse, staff nurse and later ward supervisor at the Royal Columbian. In 1930 she earned a certificate in obstetrical nursing from the Royal Victoria Hospital in Montreal. On her return to BC, she had a short stint as a private duty nurse in homes before enrolling in the diploma course in public health nursing at UBC. She received her certificate in 1934 and was approached by the Graduate Nurses Association of BC to sit on a committee to study the reorganization of registries. This experience had a profound effect on her future career through her meetings with Helen Randal, Laura Holland and Grace Fairley. A year later, Esther was employed by the Welfare Field Service in the East Kootenay District with headquarters in Cranbrook. This program was unique as it combined services of public health nursing, and social welfare.



In 1940 she took a position as a public health nurse with the Metropolitan Health Service in Vancouver. Two years later she was "loaned" to the Division of TB Control to be the nurse-in-charge of the main stationary chest clinic in Vancouver and to liaise with the public health nursing staff. In 1943, Esther was offered the position of Director of Nursing for the TB Hospital in Vancouver and the chest clinic (Willow Chest). Thus began her illustrious career in the field of TB nursing.

At this time RNABC was concerned about the high incidence of tuberculosis amongst nursing students and a mandatory six week affiliation course in TB nursing was launched, the first in Canada. Esther was instrumental in the development of this course and was the first teacher. Shortly after, Esther became Senior Nursing Administrator and Consultant for TB units in Vancouver, Victoria and Tranquille.

When George Pearson, a TB hospital, opened in 1952, Esther held the dual position of Director of Nursing and Nursing Consultant for the Division of TB Control. With the outbreak of a polio epidemic in 1954, Pearson began to admit polio patients. In order to prepare for this, Esther spent a week at VGH being orientated to polio care. She was cognizant of the specialized care and expertise needed to effectively care for this group of patients. In 1955, polio patients at VGH were transferred to Pearson and the two services - TB and Polio - merged successfully under Esther's efficient leadership. With changes in the approach to TB care in the 1960's she introduced the "minimal care unit" which was successful in motivating patients to accept responsibility for their care and recovery. She remained at Pearson until her retirement in 1966.

Esther was involved in professional nursing throughout her career. She served on the RNABC Board of Directors for thirteen consecutive years, holding offices of secretary, vice president and president from 1951 to 1953, and past president from 1953-57. In 1956 she was elected chairperson of the Nursing Section of the Canadian Tuberculosis Association and was an active participant in various programs through the 1960's. In recognition of her leadership in TB nursing in Canada, Esther received the Centennial Medal and Life Membership in the Canadian Lung Association. She was an honorary member of the BC History of Nursing Group.

Esther enjoyed writing and published many articles during her nursing career and in her retirement. She wrote historical articles, such as the History of the Royal Columbian Hospital School of Nursing, and biographies of many prominent BC Nurses. Well into her 80's she learned to read and write Swedish.

We will miss seeing her at our History meetings and will treasure her wonderful stories, her wit and her incredible memory. I personally will miss my visits with her and telephone conversations where she willingly shared her recollections of nurses such as Ethel Johns.

Esther died at South Granville Park Lodge following a brief illness. Letters of condolences can be sent to her niece - Nancy Dammkoeler, 1845 96th Avenue N.E., Clyde Hill, Washington, USA 98004. At Esther's request, donations in her memory can be made to the B.C. History of Nursing Archives Fund.

MONDAY, APRIL 5, 2004  
AT 8:00 AM  
**B. C. HISTORY OF NURSING**  
**14TH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**  
Lord Byron Room—Hyatt Regency Hotel  
Downtown Vancouver

A continental breakfast will be available at 8:AM. The meeting will take place between 8:30-10:00 AM. There will be a tribute to *Esther Paulson* and a display featuring her life and works. Come and visit with nurses dressed in historical costumes from the past! There will be door prizes. Members are cordially invited to attend and bring a potential new member. For details, please contact any member of the executive. Hope to see you there!

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EDITORS FOR THIS ISSUE!



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Beth Fitzpatrick

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Production: Eagle Publishing

The History of Nursing Newsletter is published four times a year. Submissions for the next newsletter are welcome. Please submit articles and news for the next issue to Ethel Warbinek (warbinek@telus.net) by May 15, 2004.

## **PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE By Kathy Murphy**

In early April, those attending the Annual General Meeting will hear the reports of all the activities undertaken by this productive Professional Practice Group in the past year. It is a wonderful time to reflect on the many accomplishments and set out plans for the year to come.

A particular focus for 2004 will be the continuation of our goal to create a home for the archives and artifacts related to the history of nursing in this province. This requires a variety of activities to collect financial resources for the ongoing work with the archives and artifacts collected to date. In addition, the linking with others around the province who may have "treasures" that need to be identified and recorded is an undertaking requiring resources. Anyone interested in helping with this major task is cordially invited to contact any member of the Executive to obtain further information.

The success of this group is enhanced by the many nurses who provide historical donations of their own or their relatives or friends. When doing the spring house cleaning this year, consider whether some of your history is appropriate to share with the B C History of Nursing Group!

## **MEMBERSHIP REPORT By Glennis Zilm**

This year promises to be another record year for memberships in the History of Nursing Group. Thanks to Dr. Shirley Stinson of the University of Alberta and to Dr. Helen Niskala of the University of British Columbia School of Nursing, student memberships are definitely going to break that record. Each year for the past several years, Dr. Stinson has given 10 or more gift memberships to graduate students at the UofA and for the last two years Dr. Niskala has done the same for five or more UBC students. This year Dr. Stinson had so many graduate students respond to her query about students interested in her gift memberships that she had 25 students in touch with her in just a few days. Because of this she persuaded other nursing faculty members to join her in the sponsorship efforts. Dean Genevieve Gray, Dr. Phyllis Giovanetti, and Dr. Janet Ross-Kerr all sponsored five students each.

Renewals from last year's members have already started coming in for the 2004 membership year. **Members who have not yet renewed should refer to the yellow insert in the centre of the January Newsletter.**

The Group needs to attract more full members who are registered in B.C. We would appreciate help from all HoN Members in attracting RNABC members to join. Please let the Chair know of anyone who should be approached or request copies of the brochure and membership application form and approach the individual yourself. If you wish to suggest names, or need brochures, please get in touch with Chair Glennis Zilm at 604-535-3238, or by email at [Glennis1@aol.com](mailto:Glennis1@aol.com) or by mail (see membership list).

And bouquets to Shirley Stinson and Helen Niskala!

### **Donations to the B.C. History of Nursing Group Funds 2003**

During 2003, donations to the B.C. History of Nursing Charitable Funds totaled \$5,405.17. Of this, \$3,665 was directed to the Archives Fund; this total includes \$100 donations to the "Pages of History" project and \$785.17 raised through RNs who donated an hour's wage (the 2003 RNABC Resolution). Donations ear-marked for the Scholarship Fund were \$1,510. Donations made to the General Fund totaled \$230.

The Group would like to extend a sincere "thank you" to all who donated. It is through support such as this that the Group can support the goals of a "home of our own" for nursing history and archives, and support student nurses who carry out history of nursing projects.

In addition to those listed below, three donors asked to remain anonymous. As well, 24 others made tax-deductible donations during the year, and we would also like to thank them for their support. Unfortunately, as we received donations and gave tax-deductible receipts, we did not ask them if we might thank them publicly in lists such as this – and the B.C. Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act requires we obtain such permissions. We will be requesting such information for all donations made in 2004. Meantime, please let us say that we appreciate this support during 2003.

#### **\$1,000 or more**

Nina Rumén, Vancouver

#### **\$500 - \$999**

Shirley Stinson, Edmonton, AB  
The Du Gas Family, Tsawwassen, BC  
(in honor of Beverly Du Gas)  
Esson Family, Richmond, BC

#### **\$200 - \$499**

Langara College School of Nursing,  
Vancouver, BC  
Janet Gormick, Vancouver, BC  
Margaret Evans (in honor of Lenore  
Radom), Richmond, BC

#### **\$100 - \$199**

Helen Niskala, Vancouver, BC  
Joan Doree, Vancouver, BC  
Mininchinka Chapter, RNABC,

Mininchinka Chapter RNABC, Mackenzie  
Ethel Warbinek, Surrey, BC  
Lucille Giavando, Vancouver, BC  
Glennis Zilm, White Rock, BC  
Sheila Zerr, Tsawwassen, BC

**\$1 - \$99** (includes those who donated  
an hour's wage to the Archives Fund)

Dr. Helen K. Mussallem  
Kirstine Griffith, Vancouver, BC  
M.D.E.D., North Vancouver, BC  
Lynne Esson, Richmond, BC  
Lois Blais, Vancouver, BC  
Anonymous - 3  
Plus 24 others from whom we do not have  
permission to publish.

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## **FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK by Beverly D. Leipert, RN, Ph.D.**

Why is nursing history important? This is an important question to consider as it forms the foundation of decisions to choose nursing as a career, the way we enact our careers, and our valuing of nursing history organizations such as the RNABC History of Nursing Professional Practice Group.

There are many answers to the question of why nursing history is important. I'd like to share with you some of my thoughts regarding this question. My thoughts are grounded in my experiences as a public health nurse in rural and remote Saskatchewan and BC, in my education especially in studies of nursing history in my doctorate in Nursing program, and in my life experiences as a woman.

Nursing history is important because it informs us about where we've been and how we've come to where we are. The accomplishments of Florence Nightingale, for example, are highly instructive, especially when one considers the social, economic, and gendered contexts of the society in which she lived. Ms. Nightingale must have needed enormous energy, commitment, and courage to counter attitudes about women's place and women's abilities. The work of early public health nurses is another illuminating example of the value of nursing history. The work of these nurses illustrates what can be accomplished in spite of environments where resources are scarce and situations are demanding and sometimes life threatening.

By learning about what these early nurses did and how they did it, nursing history can inform nurses today about directions we might go and how we might go there. Nurses have often ventured into unknown territory, literally and figuratively. They have asked new questions and found new answers. For example, Florence Nightingale moved nursing into places where women and nurses had never been before. She did this with persistence, intellect, evidence, and courage. She asked important questions, sought answers to these questions, then acted on the answers. Nurses today continue to do the same. We are also venturing into new territories, such as nursing in outer space settings, more nurses than ever before in academic settings, and the advancement of nursing to its full scope of practice, especially in underserved rural and remote communities. By learning about our history, we can learn about approaches our predecessors took when they too ventured into the unknown.

Learning about our history empowers nurses. Empowerment is having the ability to self-define and to gain mastery over one's self and community (Bernard, 2001). Empowerment occurs when one gains the ability to understand and define one's life. Our history helps us to understand what our knowledge and experience have been, could be, and should be, and to gain confidence in and mastery over our practices. Empowered nurses are better able to help and empower others, such as patients, clients, and each other.

Nursing history is also important because it highlights the importance of women's history. Indeed, women's history is nursing's history. As a profession that is comprised predominantly of women, there is much we can learn from the life and times, the thoughts and actions, of women who were not nurses. Recently I read the autobiography of Nellie McClung (Strong-Boag & Rosa, 2003), one of the "famous five" women in Canada who advanced the authority of women to vote and be persons in their own right. The courage and convictions of women such as Nellie McClung as well as countless other women, extraordinary and ordinary, help inform us about what women have done and can do to make a better world.

Why is nursing history important? Each of us will have our own answers to this question. Perhaps one answer that is common to us all is that nursing history makes us proud of our profession and proud to be nurses.

## References

- Bernard, W. (2001) *Beyond inclusion: Diversity in women's health research*. Retrieved December 3, 2003, from [www.acewh.medicine.dal.ca/inclusion-bernard.htm](http://www.acewh.medicine.dal.ca/inclusion-bernard.htm)
- Strong-Boag, V., & Rosa, M. (2003). *Nellie McClung: The complete autobiography*. Peterborough, ONT: Broadview Press.



Did you know that the popular song, **Bluebird on my Windowsill**, was written in 1948 by Vancouver nurse Elizabeth Clarke? It was the first Canadian song to sell a million copies. Look for the full story in the Summer Issue of the Newsletter.

## MEMORIAL NURSING PORTRAIT COLLECTION Dedication Ceremony

- WHEN:** Nurses' Week, MAY 10, 2004, 6:30-8:30 pm  
**WHERE:** R.N.A.B.C. 2855 Arbutus Street, Vancouver  
**WHY:** Celebrating the Permanent Placement of the Memorial Collection  
(in the sitting room area of the third floor, R.N.A.B.C.)  
**HOW:** Ceremony, Tea and Finger Food  
**WHO:** History of Nursing Group, Sponsors, Honoured Guests  
**RSVP:** LENORE RADOM 604-277-6782 lenoremail@lightspeed.ca



The Memorial Nursing Portrait Collection of the British Columbia History of Nursing Group was established in 1990 to provide an opportunity to contribute to the History of Nursing Scholarship Fund. The purpose of the collection was twofold: first, to raise money for the History of Nursing Scholarship fund; second, to provide a visual, lasting portrait to honour a friend or family member. The portrait would be a tribute to a person living or dead or to a project of choice, but the doll must honour a nurse or nursing history event.

This memorial collection pays tribute to the nurses and events that shaped the history of nursing in British Columbia. The collection portrays nursing from the times of early aboriginal and lay nursing, the events that shaped nursing, and the move toward establishment of professional nursing in British Columbia. The collection is complete with 27 nursing portraits and will be permanently displayed at the Registered Nurses Association of British Columbia.

## Coming Publication

### ***B.C. History of Nursing Memorial Nursing Portrait Collection: A tribute to the nursing leaders and events that shaped nursing in British Columbia***

A book will be published featuring colour plates of twenty seven memorial dolls in the collection. Historical leaders and events that shaped nursing in B.C. are highlighted in the text accompanying each nursing portrait



Elizabeth (Rankin) Berrose  
(1911 - 1990)

Sponsor: Sheila Rankin Zerr (niece)  
Miniature: Vancouver General Hospital, 1944.

In 1899, the Vancouver City Hospital Training School admitted its first class of eight students. The School grew steadily, and in 1919 joined with U.B.C. to form the first University Nursing School in the British Commonwealth. In 1942, when Beattie trained, students worked long hours under difficult circumstances as many nurses were serving in W.W.II. Beattie had a great respect for Grace Fairley and appreciated her humorous side. The final class graduated from the three year diploma program of Vancouver General Hospital.



In 1927, Elizabeth Rankin Berrose, at the age of 16, won the Queen's Diamond Jubilee Medal in a High School essay contest. After leaving school for several years, she entered the Vancouver General Hospital School of Nursing in 1942. World War II was underway. She met her soldier husband and married him. Because married nurses could not work, she left nursing and resumed to primary school teaching until her retirement in 1978. This portrait honours a special aunt, whose interest and guidance influenced many lives.

(A sample page of Portrait #1. Actual size - 8.5" x 11".  
Photography and layout by David Roberts, A.R.P.S.)

The book will be printed in a limited edition.

Copies of the book will be distributed to sponsors of the Memorial Portraits  
at a Dedication Ceremony at RNABC on May 10, 2004.

A limited number of copies will be available for sale from Sheila J. Rankin Zerr,  
P.O. Box 872082 RPO Sasamat, Vancouver, B.C. V6R 4P2.

## Honoring Helen Mussallem



An open house was held on February 1, 2004 at the home of Sheila Zerr to honour Helen Mussallem as recipient of the 2003 R. Louise McMaster Award from Columbia University. Friends and B.C. history group members celebrated Helen's success and shared her pictures of the ceremony. In the accompanying photo, Glennis Zilm shares a cup of cheer with Helen.

### B.C. HISTORY OF NURSING 2003 SCHOLARSHIP

The History of Nursing Group's Scholarship Award committee is pleased to announce the awarding of the fall bursary to **Connie Lapadat**, a Masters student enrolled in the new Nurse Practitioner program at UBC. Connie is a public health nurse who graduated from UBC School of Nursing in 1991. She is writing a paper on the History and Trend for Doctorally Prepared Nurses in Canada. Her paper will explore the historical background of doctoral programs in Canada, the impact of these programs on nursing and health care, views about the ways these programs could be enhanced, and the implications that the trend for greater numbers of doctorally prepared nurses would have on nursing and society.

The History of Nursing Group administers a tax-deductible fund to raise money for awards to students working on history projects and provides two awards a year. For further information, contact Ethel Warbinek c/o our web site at [www.bcnursinghistory.ca](http://www.bcnursinghistory.ca).

### In Print

Grypma, S. (2003). Profile of a leader: Unearthing Ethel Johns's "buried" commitment to racial equality, 1925. *Nursing Leadership*, 4, 39-47.

Helmstadter, C. (2002). Early nurse reform in 19<sup>th</sup> Century London: A doctor-driven phenomenon. *Medical History*, 46 (3), 325-350. (This was the award-winning article for the AAHN award mentioned in the last issue.)

## NEWS ABOUT MEMBERS

**Sonya Grypma** of Lethbridge, a former student member who this year renewed as an affiliate, was the 2003 winner of the American Association for the History of Nursing student researcher award and of the 2003 Margaret Allemand scholarship presented through the Canadian Association for the History of Nursing. She is currently completing her doctoral studies at the University of Alberta working on a dissertation on "Canadian Nurses at the North Honan Mission in China, 1923-1947." Congratulations, Sonya!

**Cynthia Toman**, one of our Affiliate Members, received her doctorate degree in November from the University of Ottawa and was awarded the Governor General's Academic Gold Medal for her research. The citation is for highest standing at the doctoral level and academic excellence. Only one award is given in the sciences and one in the humanities each year at the university. Governor General Adrienne Clarkson attended the ceremonies and presented the award. Cynthia's dissertation was titled " 'Officers and Ladies' ": Canadian Nursing Sisters, Women's Work, and the Second World War." The research, based on oral histories, military records, professional literature, and archival sources, examined Canadian military nurses' work from a feminist perspective and analyzed variables such as gender, class, race, ethnicity, nationality, marital status, and age. Her research now is a basis for consulting work with the Canadian War Museum and the Canadian Museum of Civilization. Dr. Toman is on the faculty of the School of Nursing at the University of Ottawa.

**Margaret Scaia**, who received one of our History of Nursing Scholarships a couple of years ago, has now joined us as a full member. She is moving to Salt Spring Island, and will be teaching part time at the University of Victoria and

Malispina Schools of Nursing. She also is working on publications and presentations based on her thesis, which used a feminist oral history approach to explore how social and historical influences between 1939 and 2001 have shaped nursing's approach to teenage mothers. She carried out in-depth interviews with 12 women between the ages of 17 and 80 who, as unmarried teenagers, had a first child during those decades.

Congratulations to new member **Hallie Sloan** who recently became a member of the Order of Canada.

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### **Tabiji: "She Journeyed with Them" by Ethel Warbinek**

A documentary film about a young nurse, Beth Shirley, who spent time nursing Japanese patients at Hastings Park and at New Denver, was shown at the National Nikkei Museum and Heritage Centre on Saturday, February 14, 2004. It was produced by Denise Calderwood, a teacher and a relative of Beth. This was the first Canadian showing.

It tells the story of Beth Shirley who had just graduated from Essondale as a psychiatric nurse. Irene Anderson, a former instructor, contacted her and asked if she was interested in working with the Japanese TB patients at Hastings Park. After being there for a short period, Beth was transferred to the newly opened TB sanitarium at New Denver which had been built for Japanese patients. On March 31 1943, 105 TB patients left Hastings Park and traveled by train to the new hospital. The film includes photos of the patients being transported, some walking and some by stretcher.

A section of the film includes excellent pictures of the TB Sanitarium in New Denver, housing units for the interned Japanese, an interesting interview with a former patient, as well as photos of some of the nurses. Beth is also interviewed and speaks of her nursing experiences while at the San. She is the only health care provider still alive who worked at Hastings Park and at New Denver. In August 1943, she left New Denver and entered VGH to complete her nursing training.

graduating in 1946. The film also shows footage of present day New Denver and the Museum.

Following the film, there was lively discussion. Two Japanese couples who had been patients at New Denver shared their stories. Denise Calderwood is planning to prepare a teaching guide to accompany the film. It is possible a showing of this interesting film, which documents an important part of our nursing history, may be available for showing to our group. More on this in the next newsletter.

## A Tribute to Edith Landells Lees 1922 - 2004 by Glennis Zilm

Edith Landells Lees' three-volume set of *The Military Nurses of Canada: Recollections of Military Nurses* will stand for many decades as one of the most significant and valuable histories of Canadian nursing. Written after her retirement, it crowned an outstanding military career as a nursing sister.



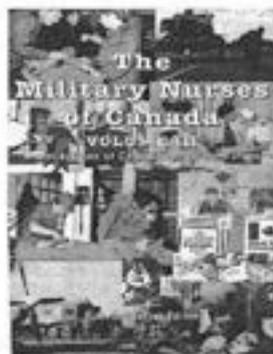
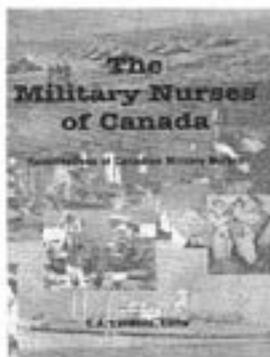
Born and raised in Alberta, Edith Landells graduated from St. Joseph's General Hospital School of Nursing in Vegreville in 1944. Her older brother, Douglas, was serving with the Royal Canadian Navy in World War II and, upon graduation, she immediately joined the Royal Canadian Army Medical Corps. Such service was a family tradition, and Edith said she had never considered any other career because an aunt had served with the RCAMC in Canada, England, and Greece during World War I. Although the war ended shortly after Edith enlisted, she worked in Canadian military hospitals, then signed on with an Australian cargo ship transporting war brides across the Pacific between Canada and Australia. She then joined the Royal Canadian Navy as a nursing sister for a few years. When the Korean War broke out (1950-1953), she recognized that further overseas service and career advancement would require further nursing education, and so she joined the United States Army Nurses Corps. This was the start of a long and distinguished career as a military nurse and senior officer in the United States forces, including service in Vietnam and Cambodia. It was also through the forces that she met her husband, Andrew Lees.

Following Andrew's death, Edith returned to Canada, settling in Vancouver.

Prompted by Nina Rumen, she joined the B.C. History of Nursing Group and took on, as a retirement project, a collection of personal reminiscences of Canadian military nurses. The project was a highly ambitious and complex one as she attempted to get in touch with every living Canadian nursing sister through the Nursing Sisters' Association of Canada and the Canadian Department of Veterans' Affairs. With dedicated determination, she contacted nurses and families and urged them to write their first-hand stories and personal memories and to loan photographs and memorabilia. As well, she wrote or found authors for brief background histories of Canadian military nursing from the Riel Rebellion of 1887 to the Canadian nursing support in wars of the 1990's in Somalia and the Persian Gulf.

The result was Volume I, which contained personal recollections or stories of 218 nursing sisters, with background maps and hundreds of photographs showing nurses in everyday working roles both during war and peacetime. Edith compiled, edited, and arranged these stories and financed and published the original 628-page book in 1995. Stories, however, continued to pour in to her, and she compiled them into two more superb volumes, with updated background materials; these were published in 1999. All proceeds from the books were given to the Nursing Sisters' Association scholarships administered by the Canadian Nurses Foundation. As well, Edith turned mentor and advisor to nursing and non-nursing researchers pursuing the history of military nursing in Canada and to many nursing students.

Edith Landells Lees died January 13, 2004, after several years of pain and suffering with an intractable illness. Her legacy as a nursing historian will live on.



### **C. Elsie Irene MacDonald 1916-2004**

Born in England in 1916, Elsie Irene Macdonald spent her childhood in rural Surrey and London, England. She achieved her SRN in general nursing and SCM for certified midwifery. During WW II she met and married Canadian soldier J.E. MacDonald and moved to Canadian. Elsie's active career took her to many locations in Canada. She loved a challenge and provided leadership in community and long term care. She remained active as a volunteer well into her 80s and she was particularly proud of her daughter's nursing career at the Vancouver General Hospital. Elsie's career has been recorded in an oral history tape and a page of history by the B.C. History of Nursing group.



### **Craigdarroch's Nursing Sisters:**

#### **Searching for Their Story**

**By Linda Boon RN, MNS and Bruce Davies, Curator**

Craigdarroch Castle Historical Museum Society is researching Craigdarroch Military Hospital. This military hospital was located at Craigdarroch Castle in Victoria from September 1919 until about March 1921. The Museum, which has more than 14,000 visitors annually, is seeking information about nurses who worked in the military hospital so that their stories can be told.

The Craigdarroch Military Hospital was operated by the federal government's Department of Soldier's Civil Re-establishment (DSCR) which, at the peak of its operation, cared for nearly 25,000 patients in hospitals across Canada. Craigdarroch

was one of three hospitals designated for "incurables."

The Castle Society has embarked on a research project which will culminate in the opening of a permanent gallery in the museum presenting the story of the patients, staff, and the operation of the hospital. Textual and photographic records of numerous DSCR hospitals were kept by the Department of Veteran's Affairs and eventually passed on to the National Archives in Ottawa, but strangely, virtually nothing remains of Craigdarroch's records.

Contemporary Victoria newspapers reveal the names of some of Craigdarroch's nurses. Bruce Davies, Curator of Craigdarroch Castle, has identified five nursing sisters. This article will present knowledge gathered to date and gaps in information regarding these nursing sisters who worked at Craigdarroch Hospital.

Bruce Davies' search of the Canadian National Archives WWI database leads him to identify five of the nursing sisters who worked at Craigdarroch Hospital. These nurses are identified as Elsie Dorothy Collis, Florence Sennett, Clara McLeod (matron), and Margaret Moore. Information about Nursing Sister Mara is yet to be discovered.

**Elsie Dorothy Collis** was a 1911 Royal Jubilee Graduate who served in WWI. She is listed in Pearson's history of the Royal Jubilee Hospital School of Nursing<sup>2</sup>. A brief paragraph describes Mrs. Elsie (Collis) Hunt's war experiences and refers to a "fascinating diary of her experiences"<sup>2</sup> along with photographs. Pearson's book includes a 1984 photo of Mrs. Hunt of Cobble Hill, BC, at the age of ninety-seven years.

The authors of this article have asked Glennis Zilm, a BC History of Nursing member and researcher, for information about these nurses. Glennis has a copy of Elsie Collis's diary and provided this excerpt:

"The following diary was kept by E.D. Collis throughout her service. Elsie Collis was born in England but was brought to Victoria by her parents when she was three years old. She graduated from the Royal Jubilee Hospital in November, 1911. Upon returning to Victoria after the war, she served in the following military hospitals, Craigdarroch, Esquimalt (now Naden), Resthaven, (where she was matron) and

finally Shaughnessy until she married in 1928."

Collis served overseas with a Canadian General Hospital which was formed in Victoria. It was originally known as the #6 Canadian General Hospital, but the name was changed even before they left Victoria to the #5 CGH. There were 73 nursing sisters with the # 6, and she lists the names. Included in the list are a W.G. McLeod (who may or may not be the one who eventually was Matron at Craigdarroch) and F. Sennett. Mara and Moore are not in the list.

The British Columbia Archives (BCA) marriage database reveals the 1928 marriage of Elsie Dorothy Collis to Harry Arthur Hunt at Strawberry Vale in Victoria. The Victoria City Archives local newspaper clippings search came up negative for her marriage announcement. Further searches of the BC Archives Vertical Files and the Cowichan Museum Archives for clippings and announcements are the next steps of the search to paint the full picture of Elsie and her nursing service at Craigdarroch.

**Florence Sennett** was a 1905 St. Joseph's Hospital graduate who, in 1935, was living in San Francisco. Florence's WW1 attestation papers<sup>3</sup> list her date of birth as February 11, 1872, and her next of kin as Mrs. M.E. Sexmith of Lindsay, Ontario. At this point, little more is known about Florence and hopefully future research will assist in discovering her full nursing story and clarify whether Florence is the nurse of interest in Craigdarroch's history.

**Clara McLeod's** attestation papers list her birth date as February 2, 1875 and her next of kin as Mrs. Samuel Kieth of 1012 Eveliegh St, Vancouver, B.C. Clara is listed as a widow. Glennis Zilm's search of her references reveals that Mrs. Clara McLeod graduated from the Winnipeg General Hospital Class of 1899<sup>4</sup>. Mrs. McLeod was in the same class as Miss Jean Matheson, who later was a Matron in the RCAMC overseas and became a matron of a military hospital in Vancouver after the war<sup>4</sup>. Given Clara's senior years, war experience and association with Jean Matheson, Glennis asserts that the likelihood of her being Craigdarroch's matron is quite strong.

**Margaret Moore's** attestation papers list her next of kin as John H. Moore of 1715 Chambers Street, Victoria. Little else has been discovered in this preliminary search

for her history.

The search for these nurses' stories of nursing service in Craigdarroch will continue. Hopefully the search will discover photographs, descriptions of their nursing practice experiences, location of living relatives or descendants, as well as names of additional Craigdarroch nurses yet to be identified.

Readers are encouraged to contact Linda Boon at [lmboon2@shaw.ca](mailto:lmboon2@shaw.ca) or at 402-1020 Esquimalt Rd, Victoria, B.C. V9A 3N2 or call 250-388-6675 if they have any information that may contribute to the meaningful stories of the women who nursed at Craigdarroch Military Hospital.

## NOTES

1. Sessional PAPER No. 14 Annual Report: Department of Soldier's Civil Re-Establishment 10 George V, A.1920, pg.16 reads..."The patients in these institutions [Euclid Hall, Toronto; Mount Royal Hospital, Montreal; Craigdarroch Hospital, Victoria] are mostly men who, for example have been shot through the spinal column and are partly or completely paralyzed. A large staff of nurses and occupational-therapy workers give them constant care, and in a recent inspection of the men, in spite of their unfortunate condition, seemed happy and contented...It is interesting to note that a not inconsiderable proportion of those ordinarily classed as "incurable" respond satisfactorily....."
2. Pearson, A. (1985) *The Royal Jubilee Hospital School of Nursing 1891-1982. The Alumnae Association of the Royal Jubilee School of Nursing*, Morriss Printing Company, Victoria, B.C.
3. Attestation papers are the personnel files of Canadians who served during World War I.
4. Alumnae Association of the Winnipeg General Hospital and Health Science Centre School of Nursing.(1989). *Nurses' alumnae journal 1989*, Winnipeg, Manitoba.

## **FUTURE CONFERENCES**

### **CAHN/ ACHN Annual Conference 2004 York University, Toronto, June 11-13, 2004**

Keynote Speaker: Dr. Dan Hickey, University of Moncton, a specialist in history of hospitals in pre-Revolutionary France. Chair for the Conference is Dr. Kathryn McPherson. Registration \$175. Information is available at [www.ualberta.ca/~jhibberd/\\_ACHN](http://www.ualberta.ca/~jhibberd/_ACHN).

### **CAHN/ ACHN Annual Conference 2005 (Canadian Museum of Civilization or Hotel in area) Ottawa, June 17-19, 2005**

This conference will be held in conjunction with the opening of the Canadian Museum of Civilization's Nursing History Display (which occurs on Thursday, June 16, 2005). This major exhibition will cover the history of nursing in Canada from New France to the present. It will be called *The Caring Profession*. Chair for the Conference is Lynn Kirkwood (one of the B.C. HoN Group's Affiliate Members).

### **CAHN/ ACHN Annual Conference 2006 St. Paul's Hospital, Vancouver June 8-10, 2006**

Theme for the conference will be "The Frontline Nurse: Historical Milestones." Chair for the Conference is Sheila Zerr. A committee is at work planning the budget, paper sessions, social events, and promotion activities. If you would be interested in helping on this committee, please get in touch with Sheila Zerr.



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**R.N.A.B.C.  
NURSING HISTORY**



**COMING EVENTS  
B.C. HISTORY OF NURSING GROUP**

**Annual General Meeting 2004**  
Hyatt Hotel, Vancouver  
Monday, April 5, 2004, 8:00 am-10:30 am

**Dedication of the Memorial Portrait Collection**  
Sunday, May 10, 2004 at 6:30 pm  
RNABC Offices, 2855 Arbutus Street  
RSVP by April 20, 2004 to Lenore Radom

**UBC School of Nursing Presents  
Dr. Geertje Boschma, PhD**

**“Responses to Mental Illness in Local and International Contexts: A Research Program  
in the History of Psychiatric Mental Health Nursing”**

**Wednesday, March 17, 2004  
Room T187/188 Koerner Pavilion, UBC**

**Education and Innovations Evening  
Wednesday, March 31, 2004 at 7:00 pm  
Cecil Green, UBC Campus**

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