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COMING OF AGE
IN THE SHADE OF WAR
1900-1919

WHEN PRESIDENT WILLIAM McGINLEY addressed the United States Congress at the turn of the century, America was still an embryo of the colossus it was to become. In 1900 there were only 45 states, and the total population was about 76.1 million. Keeping up with the Joneses was far from developing into a national mania. The average American worker earned 22 cents an hour, and only 18 people in every 1,000 had a telephone. Radios, television sets, refrigerators, and other creature comforts were still unknown.

There were more important concerns to worry about. The average life expectancy rate was just slightly over 46 years with diphtheria, tuberculosis, typhoid, and pneumonia among the leading causes of death. The infant mortality rate stood at 162.4 per 1,000. Due to advances in medicine, the foregoing diseases have been all but eliminated today. Ironically, though, the death rate from cancer in 1900 was only 64.0 per 100,000. It now runs closely behind cardiovascular disease as a major killer in claiming at least 300,000 lives annually.

More than 500 schools of nursing had graduated almost 10,000 nurses by the year 1900. Although still small because it refused to lower its admission standards to increase volume, Jefferson was already earning a national reputation as a top-flight school. Its spirit of volunteerism, a hallmark of its history, surfaced again in the grim winter of 1903-04. In answer to a call from the small town
The first two graduates of the Jefferson Medical College Hospital Training School for Nurses to become its director were: Anna E. Laughlin, '06 (left), who served as head of the School from 1908-1915; and Clara E. Melville, '10, who filled the position from 1915 until her death in 1937.

The Hospital Building, which was opened on June 8, 1907, at 10th and Sansom Streets in Philadelphia.
of Butler, Pennsylvania, four student nurses set off to care for the victims of a severe epidemic of typhoid fever.

On June 8, 1917, a new eight-story hospital was opened on the corner of 10th and Sansom Streets adjacent to the site of the old building (at 1020 Sansom Street, opened in 1877) with accommodations for 300 patients. Spacious roof gardens took the place of lawns and provided areas for open air treatments. Each of the 14 wards had an outside balcony. Eight operating rooms were fully equipped for a specific use. This expansion spurred an immediate increase in the nursing school from 50 to 90 pupils. Students were no longer sent out to homes to care for the sick, but remained in the hospital for the entire three years of the training course.

The increased enrollment naturally gave rise to a need for larger student housing quarters. The problem was solved by renovating and outfitting the old hospital building as a nurses’ home. It was a timely solution because the student body soon leaped to 125. Meanwhile, the probationary period was extended from one to three months.

In 1908, Miss Hearle resigned as director of nurses and was succeeded by Miss Anna E. Laughlin, ’06, the first graduate of the School to be appointed to the post. During her seven years in office, she made few changes in continuing the policies established by her predecessors. The 63 hours of classroom instruction in this period were complemented by “on hands” experience in such areas as pediatrics, medical, surgical and maternity. The course of study was formulated and directed by the five members of the Training School Committee of the Medical Staff, who outlined the curriculum and designated the teachers for the separate disciplines.

In 1909, the first bill regulating the practice of nursing was passed by the Pennsylvania State Legislature after two previous bills had been defeated. A Board of Examiners, consisting of five professional nurses, was subsequently established. The main purpose of the legislation was to assure the public of safe and competent nursing care. Too many of the so-called ‘nursing schools’ were churning out uneducated and poorly trained graduates. In 1918, the first list of approved schools in Pennsylvania was published. Jefferson, of course, was ranked at the top.
This scene from the 1909 annual report shows a group of children, under the supervision of two nurses, taking an airing on the Public Roof Garden of the hospital.

The Emergency Department of Jefferson Hospital depended on both horse and electrically-powered ambulances. Nearly 10,000 emergency cases were handled from mid-1908 to mid-1909.
"Tillie" takes the helm

When Miss Laughlin resigned in 1915, she was succeeded by Miss Clara E. ("Tillie") Melville, a member of the Class of 1910. Perhaps the most fabled figure in the lore of the School, she made an indelible impression on all who knew her. Stern of visage and brusque in manner, she ruled with an iron hand rarely veiled in velvet. Not one to mince words, she informed one hapless student that she didn’t like redheads. Another was admonished to comb out her spit curls. Her charges soon learned to toe the line of piety because a fall from Miss Melville’s grace could be disastrous. Nonetheless, Clara Melville’s loyalty and devotion to the School were beyond question. Her contributions to its welfare and progress were legion. After her untimely death from pneumonia in 1937, the Alumnae Association funded a scholarship in her honor.

Two of Miss Melville’s colleagues also won places in the pantheon of Jefferson immortals. The first was Anna ("Annie") Shafer ’10, night supervisor, who made her rounds in the wee small hours accompanied by a black cat. Her bunch of keys belted out a staccato rhythm on the nurses’ station in the front of the ward to attract the attention of the students on duty. Her table in the dining room was a way station where all students had to sign in each morning, before getting a bite to eat. Her famous Rule Book spelled out over 100 procedures to be followed in handling almost every conceivable contingency (e.g.: Do not allow orderlies to borrow enema cans—borrow and return them yourself; nurses are to respect their seniors and arise when a chief intern, visitor, or night supervisor enters the ward; night nurses must go on duty at 6:55 p.m. and are not to go off until 7 a.m. the next morning).

Adele Lewis, ’15, head nurse and later supervisor on Sixth Floor Main of the hospital, also earned a special niche in the gallery of memorable characters. Housed on her floor were the hair-lipped and cleft-palate juvenile wards of Dr. Warren B. Davis. Miss Lewis supervised the rigid nursing regime established for these patients, which included such steps as cleaning the suture line and feeding with an eye dropper. She bore down hard on hapless students who failed to follow instructions to the letter and brought tears trickling down many a young face. But then, in a surprising
An accident case, brought in by ambulance, is given emergency treatment before admission to the hospital.

Nurses' office is pictured on fifth floor of hospital. Nurse in background is preparing medicines for patients on rolling delivery cart. Her associate in the foreground makes sure that dosages are in accordance with instructions of attending physicians.
The teaching kitchen for student nurses, where basic principles of food preparation for patients were taught.

Middle photo depicts one of the nurseries in the Maternity Department. Babies are brought in from Nursery (bottom) to visit mothers.
Pictured here with two of her colleagues outside 8th Floor Main in 1910 is Mary (Robinson) Godfrey, '09, (far right).

A young patient's weight is checked by nurse and intern.

The first School pin (left) issued in 1909, bore the head of Florence Nightingale. It was replaced in 1910 by the long-standing design at right of a gold scroll, containing a blue cross, surrounded by black enamel with lettering denoting the name of the School.
act of mercy, she would lead the crestfallen student into the kitchen and give her a dish of the famous Lewis chocolate pudding.

Further glimpses of the School and nursing during the 1900-1919 period were provided in a tape-recorded interview with Mrs. Mary (Robinson) Godfrey, '09, now 96 years of age and as enthusiastic as ever about her chosen career. The members of her class were the first to receive a school pin in addition to the diploma. The original gold pin bore the head of Florence Nightingale, surrounded by the name of the School, with a small edge of blue enamel encircling it. This design, however, failed to
arouse much enthusiasm. Hence, an entirely new seal was created with a gold scroll, containing a blue cross, surrounded by black enamel and lettering denoting the name of the School. This modified pin was first presented to graduates in the Class of 1910.

Mrs. Godfrey recalls that in her day, the hospital staff physicians did most of the teaching of basic subjects, while the director of the School and head nurses handled most of the practical (“bedside”) instruction. Due to the shortage of graduate nurses, a senior student was often placed in charge of a ward and helped to instruct the less advanced students in patient care. Classes were held wherever space could be found near the ward.

Panoramic view of Hospital Center, Nantes, France in 1918. At left is Base Hospital No. 38, staffed by Jefferson personnel, and at right is Base Hospital No. 216.
areas. The doctors who taught classes usually held oral examinations for the students in their offices. Mrs. Godfrey herself had a long and distinguished career as a general, psychiatric, and U.S. Navy nurse.

Other highlights of this era included the elimination in 1915 of the Bishop's collar on the student uniform and its replacement by a flat collar. This change presumably cut down the attacks of "sore throats." Another significant development during this period was the formation of the Nurses' Home Committee of the Jefferson Medical College Hospital Women's Board. As early as 1908, gifts of reading lamps, newspapers and magazines, and furnishings were provided for the nurses' residence. An outing fund for student recreational trips was also set up. Down through the years, as will be noted in later chapters, this group of dedicated women has done a great deal to benefit the School through its activities.

**Jefferson goes "over there"**

When the United States declared war against Germany on April 6, 1917, the age of innocence ended. America had reached the point of no return in its shift away from isolation toward international involvement. Philadelphia switched its industrial might into an arsenal of democracy, and 70 private duty nurses petitioned the Jefferson Hospital Board of Trustees for $25.00 per week.

As the first American "doughboys" set sail for France, numerous hospitals throughout the nation formed medical units to render aid and assistance to wounded troops. The United States War Department welcomed into the fold the Jefferson contingent, known as U.S. Army Base Hospital No. 38. Dr. William M. L. Coplin, Professor of Pathology at Jefferson Medical College, assumed command of the unit. Clara Melville was asked to recruit 100 nursing personnel to man a 1,000-bed hospital, a mission which she accomplished with her usual efficiency. After a hectic fortnight of indoctrination and inoculations, the volunteers donned their somewhat baggy khakis, set their jaunty campaign hats on their heads, and slung their medical kits and gas mask canisters over their shoulders. The Army transport, *Saturnia*, slipped out of New York harbor on May 18, 1918, to join a
Elizabeth Morrill, '10, is pictured in the student dress uniform of the period.

Colonel William M. L. Coplin (middle left), M.C., U.S. Army, and Professor of Pathology at Jefferson Medical College, was Director and Chief of the Laboratory Division of Base Hospital No. 38. Major J. Norman Henry (middle right), M.C., U.S. Army, was Chief of the Medical Division.

Clara Melville (left) was Chief Nurse of Base Hospital No. 38, and Myra Badorf was one of her staff. Although nurses had no official military rank in World War I, they did wear uniforms off duty, including a jaunty campaign hat.
convoy for the hazardous trip across the submarine-infested Atlantic.

Fortunately, the group arrived safely in England eight days later and reached its destination, Nantes, France, on June 6, 1918. Due to a desperate need for help at front-line medical stations, a number of the nurses were immediately dispatched to other posts in France. Miss Melville was left with a small band of seven nurses, plus six civilian employees, to start up Base Hospital No. 38. Scores of wounded and victims of gas attacks soon began to pour into the wards. The overtaxed nurses worked like Trojans around the clock until the Armistice was signed on November 11, 1918.

In Miss Melville's absence, Nora E. Shoemaker '08, was Acting Director of Nursing, and she had her hands full. Philadelphia, which had known yellow fever in 1793 and cholera in 1832, was struck by an epidemic of influenza in the autumn of 1918. As many as 4,000 cases a day were being reported. Jefferson, along with other hospitals, was swamped with flu patients. Providing adequate nursing care was an impossible task. Many of the nurses were off sick themselves, and five students died before the dreadful crisis passed.

Upon Miss Melville's return in 1919, Miss Shoemaker resigned to join the American Red Cross relief work in Siberia. So many changes had taken place during the war that a considerable period of readjustment was necessary. But a degree of normalcy did return, and Jefferson stood ready to face whatever new challenges lay ahead.

The S.S. Leviathan, a former German cruise ship interned in 1914, was converted into a troop ship in 1917 to transport American "doughboys" to France. It carried 100,000 men to the battlefields of Europe and returned almost as many in 1919. Mary (Robinson) Godfrey, '09, served as Chief Nurse, U.S.N. on several of the great ship's voyages.