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EXPANSION TUNES UP
IN THE ROARING TWENTIES
1920-1929

AFTER THE DUST of World War I had settled, America entered one of the zaniest eras in its history. Prohibition led to speakeasies, bootlegging, and gang wars. Charles Lindbergh made his epic flight to Paris, Florida boomed, and a new movie star named Mickey Mouse was born. Women had won the right to vote and to jobs in industry. The Charleston became the national dance craze for young “flappers” and their escorts.

While some doyens of Philadelphia high society moved to the suburbs, such streets as Walnut, Locust, and Spruce retained their hauteur, as did such enclaves as Rittenhouse Square. The Sesquicentennial Exposition drew more than six million visitors during its six-month run in 1926. That same year, the Delaware River Bridge (later renamed the Benjamin Franklin) was opened, and nearly 121,000 fans jammed into Municipal Stadium to see the first Dempsey-Tunney fight.

Jefferson Medical College, which marked the 100th anniversary of its founding in 1924, joined in the vibrant spirit of the times. The Board of Trustees decided in 1922 to demolish the antiquated building at Clifton and Sansom Streets (then in use as a nurses’ home and formerly the original hospital site) to make way for the erection of the new 16-story Samuel Gustine Thompson Annex, which was formally opened on October 30, 1924.

After a series of stays in temporary quarters, the displaced nurses finally moved into a cluster of residences at 1012, 1014, and
1016 Spruce Street on August 14, 1922. The yard space in back of these buildings was approved for the construction of a new nurses' residence, which opened for occupancy on May 15, 1925. The building had 90 single rooms with hot and cold running water, a large closet, and practical furnishings. In 1926, two floors were added to the original six to increase the capacity to 120 students.

Meanwhile, facilities for teaching were also upgraded with expanded classroom space and the addition of two new laboratories, one for dietetics and one for chemistry. Miss Nora E. Shoemaker, who had returned to Jefferson from her sojourn with the Red Cross in Siberia, was appointed under Miss Melville as the first Educational Director of the School in September, 1924. Prior
to this time, nursing education was one of the many duties of the Director of Nursing. Other graduate nurses were employed as full- or part-time instructors.

Life was no bowl of cherries for student nurses in the Twenties. Residence rules were strict, and only conduct akin to that of Caesar's wife earned one late pass a month. A sinner creeping in past the hour of return was likely to find a stern housemother or Miss Melville herself waiting with a stop watch in one hand and a cat-o'nine tails in the other. Surprisingly enough, one student managed to sneak puffs on cigarettes out her dorm window and never got caught, although she always kept a parachute handy.

Classroom and lecture hours seemed to stretch on endlessly. The curriculum included instruction in hygiene, drugs and solutions, anatomy, bandaging, bacteriology, chemistry, dietetics, orthopedics, pediatrics, medical nursing, ethics, and a host of other subjects. The students recited the Florence Nightingale Pledge so many times that some of them were heard mumbling it in their sleep. One course all the girls really enjoyed was massage. While practicing on each other, it was possible for the "model" to sneak in a sorely needed 40 winks. By taking turns, each student managed to get a little nap.

Tours of duty in the hospital were also strenuous in those days. There were few practical nurses or nurses' aides that one finds in modern hospitals today. The students had to learn how to make beds, bathe, feed, and give medications and treatments to patients. One weary and absent-minded student in the diet kitchen used salt instead of sugar in making 48 cup custards for the patients. Needless to say, pandemonium resulted at supper time. But this rigorous training paid dividends. When one graduate applied for her first job, the interviewer commented: "If you graduated from 'Jeff', you can do anything," and she did. And so have her fellow graduates who, down through the years, have filled responsible positions in every field of nursing.

By 1925, the uniform skirt had risen to a revolutionary five inches above floor level. This somewhat daring experiment is said to have been motivated in part at least by a growing body of opinion that floor-length skirts aroused sleeping bacteria into swirling action. The "wolf whistles" that otherwise might have resulted from this risque exposure of trim ankles were forestalled
A group of student nurses assembles on the steps of the old OB Building at Third and Pine Streets.

A sextet of pretty student nurses in the Class of 1928 pose for the photographer on the hospital roof (right). Later, they join their classmates in fashionable attire at a Garden Party outing.
by the heavy black lisle stocking the students were compelled to wear with their flat-heeled shoes.

The year 1928 marked the start of an unique Jefferson tradition that endured through the ensuing decades. Dr. Harvey Righter, a beloved friend of all the nurses, presented to each graduate a red rose at commencement. His gesture so impressed the audience that alumni representatives led the processional at successive graduations and adopted his salutation by bestowing a rose on each newly minted nurse. Then at some unknown point in time, the ceremony was extended to the formation of the “Rose Arch”, under which each graduate passes with the coveted diploma in hand.

The centennial of the college was celebrated on May 29, 1925, with a program of special events. The entire hospital was opened to the public, and members of the Jefferson Nurses’ Alumnae Association served tea to visitors on the 15th floor roof garden of the new Thompson Annex. Even the enlarged hospital, though, could not accommodate the crowds of people seeking vaccinations after a smallpox scare broke out in Philadelphia that same spring. A temporary dispensary at 1029 Walnut Street was pressed into

Dr. Harvey Righter, a beloved friend of all the nurses, presented each member of the Class of 1928 with a red rose at commencement. His gesture eventually led to the formation of the traditional “Rose Arch” at subsequent graduations. He was obviously much admired by his faithful collie also.
Two teams of "probies" practice making up beds in approved hospital style, while their classmates await their turns (top). Next stop on their busy schedule is the Diet Laboratory to learn proper patient food preparation.
Nora E. Shoemaker, who was appointed the first educational director of the School in 1924, is shown instructing a class in the fine points of Professional Adjustments. She served as head of the School from 1937-1943.

The clinical amphitheatre of the hospital, long known as "The Pit," was opened for operative clinics in 1925. Nursing students as well as medical students used this area for classes, observations of operations, and for capping and commencement exercises. It was covered over during the late 1960's in a revamping of the hospital's emergency room facilities.
service to handle a human flood that reached over 40,000 individuals in just one week.

The clinical amphitheatre of the hospital was opened for operative clinics during March, 1925, and Miss Nora E. Smith, a 1924 graduate of Jefferson, was appointed as the chief clinic nurse. Nursing students as well as medical students used this area for classes, observations of operations and for capping and commencement exercises.

In the fall of 1928, an affiliation was arranged between the Pennsylvania Hospital for Nervous and Mental Diseases and the Jefferson School of Nursing to train male nurses for a period of 11 months in such areas as surgery, medicine, genito-urinary, the operating rooms and dispensary. Jefferson itself, however, did not accept any male students into its own nursing school until 1973.

The gaudy balloon of Jazz Age prosperity collapsed with the stock market crash of October, 1929. Dark days lay ahead. But Jefferson was in a better position than some of its fellow institutions to weather the impending storm. A modernization and expansion program had laid a solid foundation for it to grow further, even in the midst of a national depression.