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JEFFERSON RIDES OUT
THE WOES OF THE THIRTIES
1930-1939

AFTER THE GREAT stock market crash in October, 1929, the wheels of business creaked almost to a standstill. Unemployment soared to four million in 1930, eight million in 1931, and 12 million in 1932. An estimated 27.5 million Americans had no income at all. About 27 percent of the school children in Pennsylvania were found to be suffering from malnutrition in 1932. Penniless men sold apples on the streets of such cities as Philadelphia, while bread and soup kitchen lines stretched for blocks.

The international situation was sombre, too. Japan overran Manchuria; Italy invaded Ethiopia; Adolph Hitler seized power in Germany; and civil war broke out in Spain. The seeds were being sown for a holocaust that was to engulf the world in just a few short years.

At home, even such popular figures of the day as Shirley Temple, Amos 'n' Andy, and Joe Louis were eclipsed by the towering presence of Franklin D. Roosevelt, the 32nd president (1933-1945). Hated on Wall Street but beloved on Main Street, his New Deal brought sweeping reforms in all areas of the economy, including the establishment of the Social Security System. The soothing balm of his “Fireside Chats” caused the depressing theme song, Brother, Can You Spare a Dime? to give away to the more hopeful Who's Afraid of the Big, Bad Wolf?

Despite a tight budget squeeze, Jefferson had to cope with a
Nora E. Shoemaker, Director of the School of Nursing from 1937-1943.

Opened on November 21, 1931, the Curtis Clinic was the Out-Patient Department of Jefferson Hospital. The Education Department of the School of Nursing was quartered on the upper three of four tower floors added to the original eight.
daily average patient load of 551 in 1931. The need for more professional nurses remained acute. The small monthly sums allotted to students were discontinued and diverted to the employment of additional graduate nurses. Students were thus unburdened of some ward responsibilities to concentrate on classroom work. Floor nurses in those days were paid only a pittance, besides sustenance, so private duty assignments at $6.00 per day for six days, plus $2.00 for a seventh—a total of $38.00 a week—were eagerly sought.

Crowded conditions at the hospital were relieved with the opening of the new Curtis Clinic for ambulatory patients at 10th and Walnut Streets on November 17, 1931. The basic eight-story building housed the out-patient, social services, x-ray and radium, physical therapy, and occupational therapy departments of the hospital among others.

The Education Department of the Nurses’ Training School was quartered on the upper three of four tower floors added to the original eight. On the tenth floor were located a classroom for the theoretical and practical teaching of nursing courses, a dietetic laboratory with food preparation facilities, along with a reference library and study room. The 11th floor housed a well-equipped science laboratory used for teaching chemistry and bacteriology and a demonstration room with beds, bedside tables, Chase doll and infant, a model bathroom, and other appurtenances. The 12th floor contained an assembly room with a seating capacity of 175, a motion picture booth and screen, and blackboards. Adjoining it was an anatomy and physiology laboratory.

By the end of 1931, the Training School had graduated 1,031 nurses, some of whom stayed on to work at the Jefferson Medical College Hospital. That same year the Charlotte Cushman Club property at 1010 Spruce Street was purchased by the late Miss Olive Pardee and presented to the hospital as a residence for staff nurses. A passageway was built to link it with the student nurses’ residence at 1012 Spruce Street.

There was no letdown in the tempo of education in the nursing school in spite of declining economic conditions in the outside world. The probationary period was now four months, and theoretical instruction covered 763 hours of classroom work. Like their predecessors and their successors of later years, the students
The Depression of the 1930's never dulled the Christmas spirit at Jefferson. Santa's helpers set up a tree and entertained the tykes in the Children's Ward of the hospital in 1937 (top photo). Later, at the Spruce Street Residence, the nurses enjoy their own Christmas tree.
had plenty of gripes about the long hours and endless tasks ("did everything but run the elevators"), and the strict residence rules ("like living in a convent"). There were, however, some breaks in the routine—picnics, swimming parties, and trips to the seashore. Many of these events were sponsored by the Nurses' Home Department of the Women's Board of the hospital, which took an active interest in the welfare of the nursing school almost from its inception. A further boost to student morale was permission for hair bobs in keeping with modern style.

In 1935, a reference library of 1,200 volumes, catalogued and arranged in handsome mahogany cases, was presented to the Nurses' Home by Ross V. Patterson, M.D., Dean of Jefferson Medical College, 1916-1938. This was the beginning of a much needed library in the residence, and two rooms on the first floor at 1012 Spruce Street were set aside for this purpose. That same year, the Jefferson Choral Club was organized and put on its first annual minstrel show in 1938.

The first official Alumni Day of the School of Nursing was held on April 21, 1933, and became a popular annual event. That same year, the student yearbook, previously published under a series of different titles, was permanently named Nosokomos, a compound of two Greek words: "noso", the study of the sick, and "komos", a female who attends.

On May 4, 1935, a large crowd gathered in the Nurses' Residence for the unveiling of a portrait of Miss Clara Melville, commissioned by the Alumnae Association, in recognition of her devotion to her work and her 20 years as director of the School of Nursing. The portrait was presented by Miss Emma Pie, a former president of the Alumnae Association, and was accepted by Mrs. William Goodman, Jr., chairman of the Nurses' Home Department of the Women's Board. The subject herself, who normally showed little emotion, appeared deeply touched by this honor. Restored during the late 1970's, the portrait now hangs in the Scott Memorial Library.

The presentation of the portrait was a timely one because Miss Melville died less than two years later in March, 1937, following the complications of pneumonia. Her loss was a real blow to the School which she had served so faithfullly for 22 years as director. She was succeeded by Miss Nora E. Shoemaker, during whose six-
All work and no play makes a dull nurse, so members of the Class of 1933 (left) really enjoyed a dip in the pool at a swimming party. No bikinis were to be seen in those days. Five years later, the Class of 1938 added to the glamor of the boardwalk on an outing to Atlantic City.

The Class of 1935 as "probies" in cooking class.
A student nurse of the 1930's concentrates on a textbook in her somewhat cramped but cozy quarters in building behind main Spruce Street dorm.

Pictured here is one of the reception rooms at the Spruce Street residence.
One of the wards for women at the hospital in 1938. A restful color scheme helped to boost patient morale.

View of the men’s ward at the Pine Street TB hospital. This unit was affectionately called for many years “Little Jeff.”
year tenure (1937-1943) a social sciences course was added to the curriculum, and a recreational program for students was set up.

Another important highlight of Miss Shoemaker's regime was the affiliation with the Pennsylvania Hospital for Mental and Nervous Diseases that began in April, 1937. Jefferson students received three months of training in the care of disturbed patients with accompanying courses in pathology and psychiatry. It was a tough assignment involving playing games and walking with patients, coaxing them to eat, bathe, and settle down. There was a certain amount of risk involved, too, in being manhandled, so the nurses were not permitted to enter a patient's room alone.

A dramatic event for seniors in the Class of 1936 was a switch to shorter sleeves with separate cuffs. Back in 1933, a pink and white checked uniform had been introduced to be worn for the first year and a half to distinguish the younger from the older nurses in training. The advanced trainees then donned the solid pink uniform. Ten graduates of that year (1936) had a rare opportunity to put their training to good use when spring floods devastated a wide area of Pennsylvania. This group of nurses volunteered their services to aid victims of the disaster. The School of Nursing was awarded permanent possession of the Red Cross banner in honor of their performance.

During the 1930's, enrollment in the School of Nursing averaged between 230 to 240 students per year. Its already high admission standards were reinforced by a 1935 Pennsylvania State Law requiring a high school education and proof of citizenship for registration at "schools of nursing" (now an official term). Jefferson's curriculum included 35 subjects covering basic sciences and all branches of practical and specialty nursing. Extensive "on the job" training was provided in all areas of the main hospital and its auxiliaries, such as the Pine Street Chest unit. No delicate student digestive tracts or feelings were spared. The trainees were exposed to drunks; syphilitic and gonococcal cases; patients with allergies and severe burns; beaten, bruised, and cut patients; and scores of others with normal and abnormal afflictions. Students who could not "tough it" out and muster the true grit required of a nurse were encouraged to seek another vocation.

As the decade drew to a close, war clouds rumbled ever louder in Europe. A state of national emergency was declared in the
A section of the solarium, where 19 cubicles protected the little patients from danger of cross infection.

Harriet Worley, '39, gives Baby Braxton an airing on porch outside solarium.
United States. The nation’s factories readied plans to shift from civilian to military production. Jefferson, far from being weakened by the stresses and strains of the Thirties, had gained in strength. It was prepared to muster its facilities and personnel for whatever service it might be called.

The entire nurses’ student body assembles above the renowned “Pit” to honor the graduating class of 1938 (foreground). Many of the seniors and those to follow would soon be serving as nurses on the battlefronts of World War II.