

## **The Museum of Nursing History, Inc. – A Sense of Pride**

Nurses meet the different and emerging health care needs of the population in a wide range of settings and have varied experiences. The Museum of Nursing History, Inc. (Museum) endeavors to recognize the many efforts and achievements of nurses through the preservation and display of nursing artifacts, texts, and correspondence over the years.

The original idea for a Museum was introduced in 1973 by nurse leaders as well as other influential women who wanted nursing's history in Philadelphia to be celebrated along with the other historic Philadelphia activities and sites. The Museum became a Bicentennial project in 1976 and was created entirely by the donations of memorabilia and artifacts loaned or given for the original display at the Mutter Museum (History of Medicine Museum and Library) in Philadelphia, PA. At the end of the bicentennial celebration Pennsylvania Hospital offered exhibition space in the hospital's historic Pine building. The Museum was independently incorporated in 1985.

In 2005 the Museum moved to the third floor of the Scattergood Building of the historic Friends Hospital (4641 Roosevelt Boulevard, Philadelphia, PA 19124). This move enables the Museum to be open to the public and resume educational objectives for the nursing public.

Since its founding nurses from all over the country have contributed diaries, letters, books, caps, equipment, and many historical items to allow future generations to trace the flow of nursing history. Nursing's most important contributions to the country's military efforts are illustrated in a colorful display of uniforms, journals and badges of honor.

The Museum is an important educational resource for the community concerning the contributions of nursing - past and present. It is a repository where individuals can place priceless memorabilia – books, documents, letters, photographs, scrapbooks, caps and uniforms, medals, pins and military artifacts. For historians, nursing history is encapsulated here. For the public, it provides a fascinating view into the past and present of nursing.

The Museum has a permanent as well as a rotating display. A letter from Florence Nightingale to Matron Alice Fisher, Foundress of the Philadelphia General School of Nursing, “Old Blockley”, dated Christmas 1877, hangs on one wall. Display cases include photographs, caps, pins, utensils and uniforms. There is a bust of a “Blockley Nurse.” The bust of HYGEIA, the goddess of health, that originally stood in front of the old Red Cross building in Washington, DC, now stands in the lobby of the Scattergood building. Lillian Clayton was an early director of nursing at Philadelphia General Hospital (PGH), became President of the American Journal of Nursing Company and wrote many articles for publication. She was a member of the Council of National Defense, and from 1926 until her death in 1930, she was President of the American Nurses’ Association (1978). Ms. Clayton’s desk and uniform chest were donated to the Museum.

Future plans include the development of web-links to honor nursing schools that no longer exist but were important to our personal and professional memories. Nurses are invited to contact the Museum for more information about sharing pictures, caps, artifacts and personal stories.

Membership in the Museum offers nurses the opportunity to: (1) help preserve two of society's most valuable assets- the nurse and nursing history; (2) volunteer time on one of the committees; and (3) network with nurse historians.

Membership requests and correspondence can be addressed to The Museum of Nursing History, Inc., located at Friends Hospital, 4641 Roosevelt Boulevard, Philadelphia, PA 19124. Guided tours are available by appointment by calling 215-831-7819. Additional information, list of board members and several displays are available at [www.nursinghistory.org](http://www.nursinghistory.org). Additional information is available from Sandra Davis, Ed, D, RN, Museum president (sdavis10@earthlink.net).