

On Whose Shoulders We Stand: Key Health Challenges in NM History, and How Nurses Rose to Meet Them

Tuberculosis and NM Statehood

From 1880 through the 1940's, TB remained a significant driver of the development of the early healthcare infrastructure in NM. For decades it remained the leading cause of death nationally, and from 1912 through the 1940s NM had the highest rate of TB in the nation. Considered an incurable disease until the discovery of streptomycin in 1943, the prevailing treatment prescribed was copious amounts of sunshine and rest. NM was promoted both by public officials and physicians nationally as a place to come for these "Health Seekers." Thousands migrated to NM, to what was considered at the time

to be the "nation's sanatorium." This rapid and large influx of people was also a significant contributor to NM gaining statehood in 1912, and the emergence of professional nursing in the state.¹

The first two TB hospital sanatoria in NM were military, at Fort Stanton (Lincoln County) and Ft Bayard (Grant County) to serve the nation's Merchant Marine and Army soldiers afflicted with TB during the Spanish American War. In part a response to the growing awareness that TB was also an infectious disease, approximately 70 sanatoria sprang up across the state during these years. These were places where exposure

to infection could be more controlled, and "lungers" could go and receive treatment, sometimes for years. Almost every county had at least one. Many of these were little more than tent camps, some brick and mortar. Also known as the "white plague," it is important to note that care in all but a few of these sanatoria was not accessible to most of the diverse peoples of NM, but rather only to those largely white and wealthier who could afford to pay, or access scholarship support. For decades considered an incurable disease, early treatments were primarily rest, sun-based treatments, good food, and care.

(continued on page 4)

NM Nursing as a Profession Emerges – Select Events and People That Influenced Development of Our Practice

- **1919- First federally funded NM Health Department and Division of Public Health Nursing launched.**
- **1920- Four PHNs hired by the NM Health Department.¹**
- **1921- Birth of the NM Nurses Association and became a constituent associate of ANA in 1922.** Graduate Nurses organized the Association with 40 in attendance. They met at Presbyterian Sanatorium. First elected officers included President Ms. Theresa McManamin; First Vice President Mrs. Blanch A. Montgomery; Second Vice President Ms. Catherine Taylor; Secretary Ms. Bertha Rowe; and Treasurer Sister Frances deChantal.¹⁸
- **1921- U.S. Congress passes the Sheppard-Towner Maternity and Infancy Protection Act providing federal resources for initially three specially trained Public Health Nurses (PHNs).** Known as the "Sheppard-Towner Nurses," they were trained nurses with additional training and education in two of our earliest practice specialties- public health nursing and further education specific to maternal-child care. The infant mortality rate in NM was the highest in the country at more than twice the national average (140/1000). Their role was to develop and run maternal and

infant clinics in every county of the state. They shaped a new structure for our maternal-child health programs. They would rotate through our counties, sometimes 3 months at a time in each, until all counties were served. Clinic resources and education was provided to individuals, families, communities, and in training other nurses. By 1925, our small handful of NM PHNs had made 10,500 home visits, examined 3900 babies, examined 24,900 school children, and travelled 130,000 miles across the state. Some were here just a few years, others remained for a lifetime.¹ More detail on these early public health nurse pioneers and their remarkable achievements is found below the timeline and will also soon be available in the exclusive online content

of The New Mexico Nurse...

- **1922- Nurse Midwife consultants were sent from the U.S. Children's Bureau under the Roosevelt administration.** They began work with NM midwives creating a training program. NM had 800 granny midwives/parteras practicing in NM at that time, who delivered most of the babies. Collaborating with these community-based leaders and ensuring education in skills and knowledge of safe delivery, early identification of warning signs and when to refer to hospital care, etc., enabled dissemination of safe maternal-child practices broadly around the state. This program lasted until the 1940s and is credited both in NM and nationally with dramatically improving patient and community outcomes and has had a long-term

impact of excellence and commitment on NM nursing history. Anne Fox, RN was one of these first consultants who remained in NM with a diverse nursing practice for decades after this program ended. Among the first 3 formally trained nurse-midwives in NM, she was recruited from the Frontier Nursing Service in Kentucky by the fledgling Catholic Maternity Institute in Santa Fe and served the northern regions of the state. Founded by the Sisters of Charity, CMI is broadly credited as the first free-standing birth center in the country and a significant contributor to improved maternal-infant outcomes both in NM and the country at large. The New Mexico Nurse exclusive online content will contain a transcript of an oral history Anne provided in 1986, that is rich in details of what her NM nursing practice encompassed from the 1920s through 1970. A picture of both remarkable challenges and achievements.^{1,19,20}

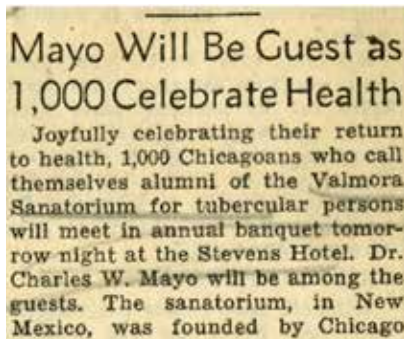
- **1923- Birth of NM Board of Nurse Examiners** (later to become our current NM Board of Nursing) was established in legislative statute, NMAC, Chapter 16, Section 1-10.²¹
- **1925- 1935- continued recognition and growth of NM PHNs- (workforce grew from 14-35 nurses).** It is



Anne Fox, RN was one of the first formally trained pioneer nurse-midwives in NM, and one of the Nurse Midwife Consultants circa 1922 working in Mora and Embudo. Courtesy of UNM Digital Archives.



Roswell's healing powers drew people in; Numerous sanatoriums were offered to the sick in the late 1800s, Roswell Daily Record. Jun 18, 2017. Courtesy UNM Health Sciences Library archives³



Dinners were held annually with Chicago funders and hundreds of physicians from around the country to promote and raise funds for the nationally known Valmora TB Sanatorium in Watrous, NM/Mora County circa 1920s. Courtesy UNM Health Sciences Library archives³



Circa 1920's Postcard. As many as 32 cottages were built in addition to the main hospital as part of the Valmora Industrial TB Sanatorium in Mora County, NM. Each would house 1-2 patients. The main hospital was for patients requiring higher levels of care. Found on a Google internet search.⁴

notable that in 1936, most of the state population still lived in rural and hard-to-reach areas (74%).^{1,12}

- **1930- PHNs increased to 32.** By 1950 there were 127.¹
- **1934- The first NM PHN practice standards were developed, which also applied to all school nurses.** We were among only a few early states to have them. By 1938 we ranked in the top four states for having the highest quality of PHN practice standards. They were used as a guide by other states as well as the U.S. Army Public Health Nurses Program.^{1,22,23}
- **1935- The Social Security Act passed-** Title V funding dramatically increased the number of NM Public Health Nurses especially for maternal child programs and led to the creation of the Maternal-Child Health Bureau; following in 1936, the NM Maternal Child Health Division in the NM Health Department was created.¹
- **1935- A required license to practice as LPNs and RNs passed into law federally after many years of attempts.** This also provided additional safety measures for the public through protecting the title of nurse in all states. However, it was not enforced broadly until 1947 due to the influ-

ences of WWII on work-force shortages at home. Until that time anyone could call themselves a "nurse," whether or not they had received any training.²⁴

- **1936- The Social Security Act also provided funding to NM -and established the San Miguel County Pilot Project.** This project furthered the development of PHN maternal-child care standards and established a student field training center for those returning to the state after completing PHN academic work. There were only a few of these early PHN training programs and none in NM. The Social Security Act included funding for training public health nurses, and for nurse-midwife training.¹
- **1937- NM Board of Nurse Examiners' name changed to NM Board of Examiners for Graduate Nurses.** This was a result of the growing trend nationally to improve and standardize nursing education – with this our NM Nursing Practice Act now added inspection of nursing schools and student clinical experience to its responsibilities. The name was changed again in 1953 to its current one as



We haven't been able to find a picture of Clara yet, but here is a Graduate registered nurse receiving instruction in the technique of anesthesia from a doctor circa 1941. Library of Congress, no. 2017699391. Found at www.loc.gov/item/2017699391

the NM Board of Nursing (BON). Our Practice Act was also legislatively changed to add the role of the NM BON as responsible for setting the state standards for nursing education, and to conduct exams or evaluations of nurses to be licensed to practice in the state.²¹

- **1940- Hospitals were starting to advance in complexity of patients and treatments offered.** Nursing practice scope has continued to expand to meet these needs. The first formally trained nurse-anesthetist in the state, Clara Williams, RN started practicing at Presbyterian Hospital in Albuquerque in 1940. She had originally come to NM in the mid-1930s as part of the U.S. Public Health Nurse Service as an operating room nurse to care for tuberculosis patients at Ft Stanton. She did her tour of a couple years then left for a few years to pursue formal education as

a nurse-anesthetist. The approaching WW II changed some of her personal plans. She decided to return to NM in 1940 and ultimately remained at Presbyterian until 1973. Clara's practice as a nurse-anesthetist was already ongoing for almost a decade before the first physician anesthesiologists came to the state at the end of the 1940's after WW II.

The exclusive online content will contain a full transcript of the oral history Clara Williams provided, that is rich in details of what NM nurse anesthetist practice and training was like, with a glimpse into NM surgical hospital environments from 1940 through 1970. An excerpt of her interview is included here. Courtesy UNM Digital Archives Special Collections of Oral Histories conducted by Dr Theodore Spidle in 1986.

(continued from page 2)



A yet unidentified Ft Bayard nurse circa 1920. Part of an exciting new Silver City Museum exhibit running through 2025. Healers and Heroines: Women and the Shaping of Local Health Care (Grant County focused). More to come on this exhibit...⁵

Experimental treatments evolved further over the early decades of the 20th century

requiring trained nurses to care for them and prevent spread of infection further.²

Evolution of Our Early Western Healthcare Infrastructure

Early Western medicine healthcare systems were first established in NM from the latter half of the nineteenth century and continued to evolve throughout the early decades of the 20th century, principally driven by three religious groups. These were Catholic nuns with the Sisters of Mercy and the Sisters of Loretto, Presbyterian Missionaries, and Methodist missionaries. The Catholics brought hospitals to Santa Fe, Holy Cross in Taos, and St Joseph's in Albuquerque. Buildings and infrastructures were built with funds and ongoing support from the Church but were unable to open until Sisters from the Motherhouse who were trained as nurses could arrive to provide care to patients, develop infrastructure, and train others in the care of patients. The Pres-



Nurse Lilly Radcliff, Nurse Sister Marie De-Sales from Regina School of Nursing-circa 1900s¹⁰. NM Archives Online

byterians started Presbyterian Medical Services which included Las Clinicas del Norte in El Rito, Ojo Caliente, and Taos. Dr. Cooper founded Presbyterian Hospital in Albuquerque and Espanola. The Presbyterians also founded hospitals in Roswell, Embudo, and Dixon. The Methodists founded what was to become Lovelace Hospital in Albuquerque and Memorial Hospital in Las Cruces (obtained by Dee Billops on review of archived newspapers at Mora Historical Society, and interviews with Presbytery of Santa Fe, Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Santa Fe, and NM Methodist Conference).

Hospitals in these years were not like those of today and mainly treated respiratory diseases such as TB and pneumonia. Most care occurred in the home. Training for nurses was not yet standardized, still provided mostly by Sisters, and was just beginning to evolve as secular training in the 1920's U.S. guided by Florence Nightingale's principles of nursing care and education. Prior to this nurses' training was provided by Sisters, and often at their Motherhouse, until they began to bring nursing education into the state along with our first hospitals. After all, nurses and students were needed to provide patient care and operate the hospitals. Sister Blandina from the Sisters of Charity is credited with the opening of the then NM territories' first hospital-St Vincent's in Santa Fe and provided healthcare to the most vulnerable all across the territory, especially immigrant

Scope of Practice Glimpse

Oral interviews with NM nurses Erma Marbut and Irene Johnson told of nursing practice in the 1950's care of these patients included the job of airing out patients' mattresses in the sun to "kill" the germs (personal conversation as told to Dee Billops).

Before these sanatoria, care was uncoordinated and often delivered in hotels where the afflicted stayed. More and more people were needed to provide trained nursing care and treatment procedures. We needed more places for patients to go, more nurses to care for them, and people and places to train the nurses...sound familiar?

Scope of Practice Glimpse

"SPIDLE: What kind of training did you get at Barnes [Hospital]? What were the anesthetics you were taught to administer? WILLIAMS: Well, ether, nitrous oxide, and (ethylene?), but it never was too popular as an anesthetic because it is very explosive, dangerous. I gave a little bit of (vinathane?), that's another drip. They were talking about pentothal, but Barnes didn't have it, so I had to pick that up on my own. There was another one, but it was never as popular as pentothal. ...I travelled to other hospitals including St Joseph's and Lovelace when they didn't have anesthesia coverage. And I did go down to Belen because there was a doctor, a surgeon, who would go down there now and then. And then Carrie Tingley Hospital was at Hot springs. They would be without anesthesia, and they had a doctor from El Paso who came up and did the surgery...There were no hospital requirements to show advanced education in anesthesia. Your registration as an R.N. qualified you to work in the hospital. You didn't need any special approval."²⁵

children. She is the first individual in the state's 400-year history with Catholicism to have a petition made to the Vatican for canonization and sainthood (2014) for her contributions to healthcare and public education in NM. This is in active process today.^{6,7} Another legacy of the Sisters of Charity is the opening and administration of St Joseph's Sanatorium, Albuquerque in 1902, and soon after the



Two nurses in the new St Vincent's Hospital laboratory circa 1920s. Santa Fe New Mexican, December 29, 2024¹¹

state's first nursing education program as part of the hospital.⁸ Nurse Sister Zeta Denman was the first hospital administrator. More on these and other early influences that the Sister nurses made on our healthcare infrastructure and early nurse training programs to be made available in our exclusive online content.

Nurse's Work Environment in the Time of Statehood circa 1912

- Ft Stanton Marine Hospital, operated by the U.S. Public Health Service,



Nurses at Regina School of Nursing circa 1900s. NM Archives Online¹⁰

staffed one nurse for 150 ambulatory patients who lived in tent houses. There were four nurses in the infirmary that included one night nurse for 30 beds. Nurses worked 12-hour shifts and were paid \$35/month. By 1920, staff had grown to more than 10 nurses and six physicians and were soon caring for 236 patients.

- Presbyterian Hospital operated a TB Sanatorium in Albuquerque with four to five nurses on staff. They worked seven days/week, with two afternoons off.^{12,13}

Evolution of NM Nursing as a Profession

The perfect storm of another war, and another global infectious disease- World War I (U.S. engagement 1917-1918) and The Great Influenza Pandemic (1918), were both drivers of the rise of standardized nursing training and education, advancing treatments and care needs, and a critical shortage of nurses and physicians. Acute shortages existed both nationally and at home in our fledgling state. These were the principal contrib-

utors to our emergence as a profession. The top two demands for trained nurses were military camps first, then civilian hospitals. Most care at the time occurred in the home, and patients and families could hire a "private duty nurse" to provide varied care needs. There were no requirements for training, or oversight of training content. Most of the nurse training that did occur was by the Sisters, often out of state at the Motherhouse. These training "centers" still varied significantly



From the Silver City Museum exhibit. Note, per the Clayton News article mentioned on page 6, the WW I Red Cross Nurses' uniform was changed from white to grey because of limited laundry facilities on the war front. The uniform was also protected, the only country to do so, so none other than these trained and vetted nurses were permitted to wear it.¹⁵



Fort Stanton nursing staff with the Head Nurse, April 1920? Palace of the Governors Photo Archives Neg. no. 2010.17.37.16

Scope of Practice Glimpse

There were no IV antibiotics yet, nor were there intensive care or other specialty units in hospitals. IV treatments did not become a prevalent treatment modality in hospitals until well into the 1950s, although administering them was becoming an emerging part of nursing practice in the latter 1940s (previously only done by physicians). Pre-1940, only physicians were permitted to administer⁹. The onset of increased need during WW II advanced modern day nursing scope of practice, and now it is a core function. It wasn't until the 1960's that IV pumps entered the scene.

NURSING SERVICE TO BE VERY BEST

Best Surgeons and Best Nurses in United States Sent With Army to France—Only Graduate Nurses May Serve

"...The greatest advance made by the American Red Cross in the science of looking after an army's welfare is in its nursing service. The United States is the only nation which entered the present war with a fully enrolled and organized service of trained nurses. The most rigid rule of the Red Cross is that none but graduate nurses shall be permitted to serve as nurses in American war hospitals...Fine buildings do not make a fine hospital- it is the surgical and nursing attention which the patient receives...The American Red Cross is sending with the army the best surgeons and the best nurses in the United States- the best in the world... These are the qualifications of a Red Cross Nurse: She must have

had at least two years' course of training in a general hospital with a daily average of 50 patients; she must be registered in states where registration is required; she must be at least 25 and not over 40 years of age; she must be approved in a personal interview with a member of the local Red Cross committee; she must show her intelligence by writing an essay on some subject of nursing; she must be endorsed by the executive committee of an approved nursing organization, by the superintendent of the training school from which she graduated, and by two members of the local committee on Red Cross nursing service; and finally she must pass a physical examination."¹⁴

In an excerpt from an article in the Clayton News (Catron County), dated November 10, 1917

cantly in content and methods but were early roots of nursing standards.

To meet the need for trained nurses to serve our war efforts, Congress identified that training a workforce was necessary both in peacetime and in war. To meet this, the American Red Cross established the Red Cross Nursing Service in 1909- led by another visionary nursing pioneer- Jane Delano. By 1917, just eight years later, 12,000 trained Red Cross Nurses had been deployed to serve the war effort.

The digitized Clayton News newspaper clipping with the full article provides additional detail on what this Red Cross nursing workforce in 1917 was like and will be made available in the exclusive online content of The New Mexico Nurse.

But Where Have all the Nurses Gone?

With so many nurses now serving the war effort, 1918 saw the birth of the U.S. Public Health Nurses (9,000 in force nationally) to address our nursing workforce needs at home. This was in recognition of the patient and community improvements realized through the visionary work of Lillian Wald, "mother of public health nursing" and the Henry Street Nursing Settlement in New York City. However, many of these nurses were recruited to serve in at home military

hospitals, especially after the war ended. Civilian individuals and communities also needed nurses desperately. Communicable diseases, high maternal child mortality and morbidity rates, and poor community sanitation infrastructures contributed to high levels of disease and were many of the highest drivers for skilled nurses in these early years. So, also in 1918, the Home Defense Nurses were created nationally. These nurses also received standardized training but could not be recruited into military service. They served civilian healthcare needs only. These national programs were drivers for growing the professional nursing infrastructure here at home.

Back in New Mexico, in addition to war and the Great Influenza pandemic, TB was still the leading cause of death in the state, and other infectious diseases such as smallpox and diphtheria threatened many of our communities. As stated earlier, many history fragments are fragile and easily lost. One of our history sleuths had their white gloved hands briefly on an archived letter housed in special collections in a vault in the NM State Archives. It was a mimeographed copy from the U.S. Surgeon General to then Governor Anaya (1917), stating 'what an amazing job' the nurses and doctors in NM had done in quelling the Pandemic in the state, so that recruitment of sol-

diers into the war effort could continue. For many months prior to this, military recruitment for the war effort had been paused in many of our communities around the state because of high rates of infection. He also wrote that he thought they were underpaid. The Governor used this communication opportunity to also put in a plea to the Surgeon General for a funded Health Department for the state (Lisa Leiding, personal conversation). Soon after, in 1919, the first NM Health Department, and Division of Public Health Nursing was launched.¹

One of the nurses mentioned in a related collection of letters and reports and part of the success of this early 1918 public health effort was Nurse Adeline Taves from the Red Cross who worked to improve health conditions for the communities in the Wagon Mound area. We don't know anything more about her, but Thank You, Adeline!

Located in Collection 1959-096; Governor Washington E. Lindsey Papers¹⁷

The Rise of NM Schools of Nursing

The Sisters of Charity established the first diploma school of nursing (Regina School of Nursing) in the state in 1942, as a joint venture serving St. Joseph's Hospital in Albuquerque and St. Vincent's in Santa Fe. The program was geared to un-



Albuquerque Tribune September 10, 1957 <https://www.newspapers.com/article/the-albuquerque-tribune-regina-school-of/142384980/>

married women primarily Hispanic and Native American to serve the population in central and northern NM. There were 14 students in the inaugural class. The school closed in 1969 after the last class of graduate nurses.

The 1960s ushered in another new era in nursing education. ANA position statements were recommending more advanced education with a Bachelors in Nursing as a minimum degree due to the advancing complexities of healthcare treatments and patient needs. The ANA's statement followed the landmark legislation Nurse Training Act of 1964. NM nursing programs were growing rapidly, at first diploma, then transitioning in the mid-late 1960s forward into increasingly non-religious college institutions.

The McCurdy Practical Nursing School was established in Espanola and another in El Rito at the NM Spanish Normal

School by the Presbyterians after WW II to train workers for their hospitals. Both schools closed in 1975 when the Normal School moved to Espanola and became Northern NM College. The following year Northern introduced its LPN to RN program (history provided to Dee Billops by Theresa Lopez and DeDe McNair). Western NM University was started by the Presbyterians as a Hispanic teacher's college in 1894 in Silver City. They started a Bachelor's nursing program in 1978. The Archdiocese of Santa Fe started the University of Albuquerque in 1921 as a teacher's college. It sponsored an Associate's nursing program from 1975-1986.

The Indian Health Service sent women to become nurses either to the Presbyterian or the Catholic schools established in NM. Native nurses also attended the Presbyterian RN diploma school in Ganado, AZ, open from 1948-1965. They mainly

served female nursing students from the Navajo Nation (obtained by Dee Billops from research articles from Ganado Hospital and conversations with Tessie Lopez and Solema Newton who were graduates). There was an LPN school in Crownpoint to serve the Indian Hospital there open from the 1960's until 1975 at which time the school was transferred to Dine College in Tsaile, AZ (obtained by Dee Billops from conversations with Peter, an employee in Facilities Management at Crownpoint Clinic).

In the southern part of the state, many LPN and RNs trained at nursing schools in El Paso, TX. In 1965, NM Junior College in Hobbs, NM created an LPN program, expanding to an RN program 10 years later. The Normal Hispanic Teacher's College in Portales became Eastern NM University in 1927 and started its ADN program in 1975. This later expanded to a BSN entry program. Dona Ana Community College started an LPN program in 1966, adding an ADN in 1973. NM State University in Las Cruces started their BSN program in 1960, but it did not grow significantly until the 1970s with a new push to increase nurses in hospitals. This was prompted by the passage of the Medicare and Medicaid Act which increased the number of nurses in hospitals (an RN for each floor and the growth of specialty care units).

San Juan Community College started its Associates program in 1975, improving access for students from the northwestern parts of the state. In Albuquerque, Central NM College (then Technical Vocational Institute) began with an LPN program in 1975, and expanded to add an ADN program in 1978. University of NM College of Nursing was founded as a BSN program in 1955. This program also integrated more administrative and teaching content, not only bedside nursing, as RNs were also functioning increasingly as supervisors and educators in our hospitals (obtained by Dee Billops from UNM Health Sciences Library Archivist, Abby Weiser).

It is important to mark in our nursing



Admiral Josephine T. Waconda, BSN, CFNP in 1987 became the first New Mexico nurse to achieve the position of Assistant Surgeon General of the United States, which carried the rank of rear admiral in the PHSCC, making her the first Native American to achieve the rank and be designated as a one star flag officer.²⁹

history that the faculty of the Regina School of Nursing played an evidence-based and pivotal advisory role in the state-wide transition from diploma school to college-based programs for nursing education in NM. The NM State Department of Education conducted an in-depth project and produced an extensive report of guidelines for this transition in October 1967 which is on file nationally with the U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare Office of Education. Regina School faculty named in the report are Eloise Barhorst, Marjorie Christiansen, Pearl Dillon, Helen Fahs, and Karen George.

"GUIDELINES WHICH EVOLVED FROM PHASING OUT THE REGINA SCHOOL OF NURSING AND ESTABLISHING AN ASSOCIATE DEGREE PROGRAM WITHIN THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBUQUERQUE COULD BE ADOPTED BY OTHER INSTITUTIONS FACING SUCH CHANGE. THE MANUAL SUGGESTS PROCEDURES FOR ESTABLISHING AN ASSOCIATE DEGREE PROGRAM AND

EXPLAINS ADAPTATIONS MADE BY THE REGINA SCHOOL OF NURSING AND THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBUQUERQUE FOR THE FOLLOWING--EXPECTATIONS FOR THE ASSOCIATE DEGREE GRADUATES, OBSTACLES TO ESTABLISHING ASSOCIATE DEGREE PROGRAMS, INITIAL PLANNING, PHILOSOPHY AND OBJECTIVES, EDUCATIONAL AND HEALTH FACILITIES, CONTRACTS, PUBLIC RELATIONS AND PUBLICITY, ORGANIZATION AND ADMINISTRATION, FACULTY, CURRICULUM, STUDENTS, GRADUATES, AND EVALUATION."

From: Transition in Nursing Education.
[https://archive.org/details/ERIC_ED017683 Oct 1967](https://archive.org/details/ERIC_ED017683/Oct%201967)

A Few Other NM Nurse Firsts

Beatrice C. Martin, R.N. was another NM public health nurse pioneer. She was the second nurse to work in the Albuquerque Public Schools in 1940. School nurses were trained as PHNs then. She was the first nurse for Albuquerque High and Junior High School. She was also Executive Director of NMNA from 1959-1970 and lobbied for the practical nurses to gain their right to have a license and set up the standards for them. Here's her description of life as a diploma program student in the 1930's...

"...a three-year, live-in type..."

I feel I got a very good education, but of course, we worked. That was when student nurses had half a day off a week and half a day on Sunday, once a month. We lived in the nurses' home, and we roomed with whoever they designated... We didn't go out weeknights, but on Friday night we could go out till 10 o'clock, on Saturday night, once a month, we got late leave till twelve.²⁵

Courtesy of UNM Digital Archivess

Signed into federal law in 1982, the genesis of National Nurses Day began here in New Mexico. Yes, that's right, it was NM nurses' voices! In 1981, Carol Lewis, a reg-

istered nurse at Lovelace Medical Center in Albuquerque (who also inspired her daughter to become a nurse in Las Vegas, NM), initiated, and with the backing of NMNA and other nursing organizations went to then New Mexico Representative Manuel Lujan, Jr. Congressman Lujan (R-NM) served NM in the U.S. House of Representatives 1969 to 1989. Convinced by NM nurses' voices, he put forth the resolution to celebrate May 6th as National Recognition Day for Nurses. It was passed by the NM Legislature that year. The ANA also rallied to support, and in 1982 the U.S. Congress soon passed a joint resolution (H.J.Res.263) designating May 6 to be National Recognition Day for Nurses. Then President Ronald Reagan proclaimed it into public law. Not the first time it had been proposed nationally, but this time it was successful.

The list of sources below is not an all-inclusive list of the footprints left by NM nurses that we found during our investigations. These are a brief finding that only reflects the content used here. Our exclusive online content will also feature a broader bibliography of NM nursing history. The journey continues...

If you have additional archives, memoirs, or pictures that you would like to share please let us know. Contact dwalker@nmna.org ■

Endnotes

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- 2 Lewis, Nancy Owen. "High and Dry in New Mexico: Tuberculosis and the Politics of Health." New Mexico Historical Review 87, 2 (2012). <https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/nmhr/vol87/iss2/1>
- 3 TB newspaper clippings. University of New Mexico Health Sciences Library and Informatics. New Mexico Archival Special Collections.
- 4 Cottage, Valmora Sanatorium. Valmora, NM https://images.search.yahoo.com/search/images;_ylt=AwrjJpEjgDxoPOANcMNXNyoA;_yl

- u=Y29sbwNncTEEcG9zAzEEdnRpZAMEc2VjA3Nj? p=valmora+sanatorium+cabin+circa+1920&fr=mcafee
- 5 Healers and Heroines: Women and the Shaping of Local Healthcare. Javier Marufocurator. <https://www.silvercitymuseum.org/598/On-Exhibit-Now>
 - 6 “Fastest nun in the West”: Woman Who Served New Mexico one step closer to sainthood. Natalie Wadas. KRQE Albuquerque News. January 4, 2025 <https://www.krqe.com/news/albuquerque-metro/fastest-nun-in-the-west-woman-who-served-new-mexico-one-step-closer-to-sainthood/>
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 - 12 Essays in 20th Century New Mexico History, edited by Judith Boyce DeMark, University of New Mexico Press, Albuquerque, New Mexico, 1994.
 - 13 A History of Presbyterian Hospital- 1908-1976. Marion Woodham, Albuquerque, New Mexico
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