

Nursing Historical Galleries Self-Guided Tour

University of Wisconsin-

Milwaukee
School of Nursing
Center for Nursing History

July 2025



Nursing in the Military



Public Perception of Nursing

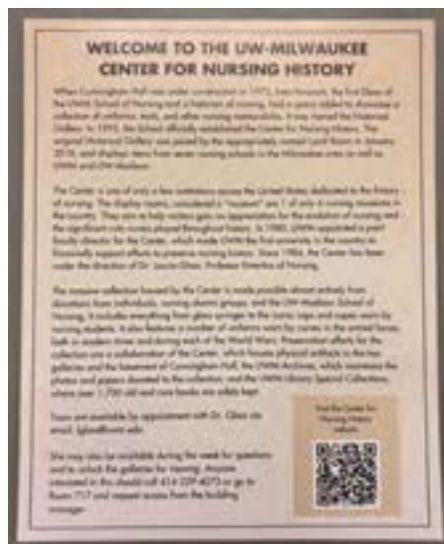


Nursing Education



International Collaboration in Nursing

The Galleries



Gallery 1



Gallery 2 ("The Local Gallery")



Gallery 3

Gallery 1

Florence Nightingale



Florence Nightingale Case

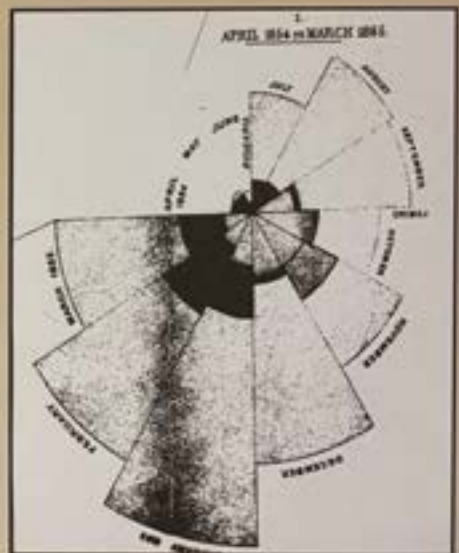
Florence Nightingale is considered the mother of the nursing profession.

Early Nursing (1853-1913)

Early Nursing (1853 - 1913)

The idea of nursing as a career has completely changed in the past 200 years. In previous generations, caring for sick and injured individuals was an expected part of women's caretaking roles. Even during times of war, women might follow behind battle lines and treat wounded soldiers, but never saw conflict themselves or received official training, recognition, or compensation for this work.

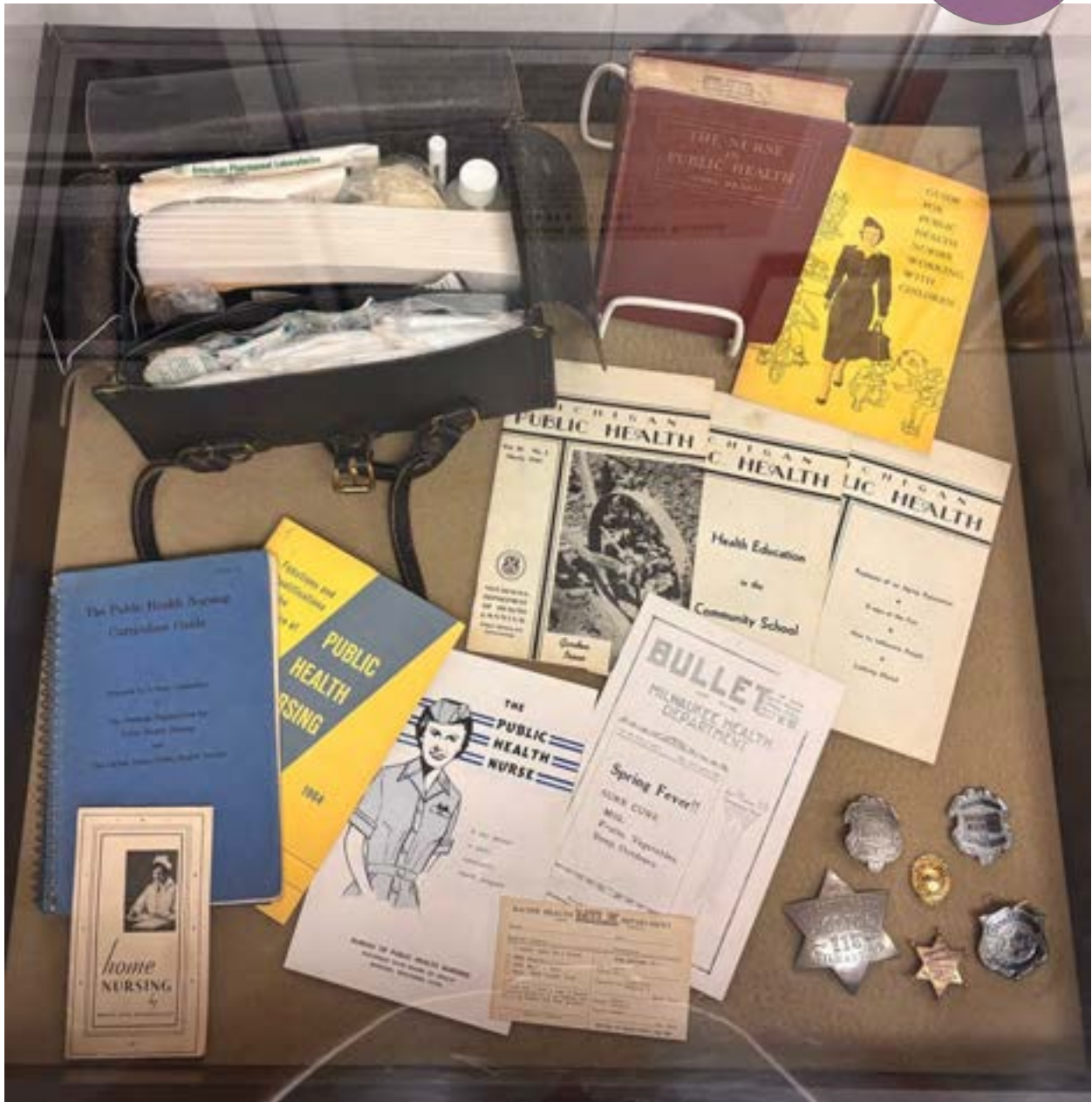
During the Crimean War (1853 - 1856), Florence Nightingale (1820 - 1910) traveled to the battlegrounds around the Black Sea and began a more standardized approach to military hospital care. Nightingale's work fundamentally showed the importance of quality nursing on the lives and longevity of soldiers and those very practices were then brought back to the home front. She gathered data that demonstrated the impact of effective nursing on lower mortality rates, as seen in the chart to the right.



Increasing recognition of the field of nursing led to the establishment of training schools for nurses. These schools offered young, unmarried women on-the-job training: nurses learned from other nurses and doctors while working in hospitals, providing a cheap source of labor for the hospitals, and then earning a diploma at the end of their training period. After completing the program, nurses could continue to work in hospitals or in homes as private duty nurses. Marriage would typically end a nurse's professional career.

The first school for nurses in Milwaukee was founded in 1888. By the outbreak of WWI, more than thirteen had been opened in the city.

The Birth of Public Health



Public Health Case

Public Health nursing started in the United States in the late 1800s with the great influx of European immigrants to large US cities. Most immigrant families lived in close and squalid conditions in tenement houses. As a result, disease and sickness spread quickly. Visiting nurses brought health care to patients and their families in their homes rather than hospitals. Nurses treated the sick and educated families on health care and general hygiene.

The Birth of Public Health



Pamphlet about Public Health Nursing

Public Health Nurse Badges

The badges were worn by local South East Wisconsin Public Health Nurses and Staff while on duty.



Wool Overcoat worn by Public Health Nurses

Public Health nurses usually wore navy blue uniforms



World War I and the Interwar Period (1914-1938)

World War I and the Interwar Period (1914 - 1938)

During WWI, nurses assisted with new medical techniques, including applying splints and administering antitoxin treatments for tetanus, while working tirelessly to save wounded allied soldiers. Nurses qualified to go overseas were required to be white, 25 to 35 years old, unmarried females who graduated from a training school. As the war went on, these qualifications expanded to allow more nurses to be volunteers.

When WWI began, nurses fought to earn their place and respect in the war zone. Despite being overseas alongside the US Army soldiers, it was not until the 1920 Army Reorganization Act that nurses were given unofficial officer ranks to help them exercise authority and render better services. After the war ended, nurses brought back their knowledge and experience with them, demanding more respect for their profession and the creation of domestic nursing programs around the country.

Upon their return, some nurses worked in public health to improve the healthcare available in their local communities. Elizabeth Leenhouts (right) was Milwaukee county's first public health nurse, who worked with tuberculosis patients before WWI. During the war, she volunteered with the Red Cross and served overseas at the Milwaukee Unit in Base Hospital No. 22. When she returned home, she became the superintendent of nurses at the Milwaukee Muirdale Sanatorium, which specialized in care for tuberculosis patients.



Elizabeth Leenhouts



Dolls, Baby Bottles, and Caps



Dolls and Bottles Case
Text box.

Dolls Dressed as Student Nurses



Nursing Uniform Dolls

In hospital schools of nursing, it was a tradition for students to replicate their unique uniforms for a doll. These dolls represent uniforms from various nursing schools,



Nursing Caps



The Historical Gallery owns over 130 caps from various schools of nursing



The Signe Cooper cap collection, over 100 caps, was donated by the UW School of Nursing..

Nursing Caps

The practice of wearing caps grew out of the religious and military tradition which often required formal head coverings. Each school of nursing had a unique cap that identified its graduates. A black or blue velvet stripe was added to the cap when the student nurse graduated. In the 1970s, the tradition of nursing caps began to fade.

Nurses as Flight Attendants



United Airlines Stewardess Uniform ca. 1944.

In the 1930s, as US airlines increased their passenger service, they hired nurses as the first airline stewardesses. Nurses tended to the needs of passengers and provided a greater sense of safety in the early days of flight.



Poster Depicting the "Average United Stewardess"

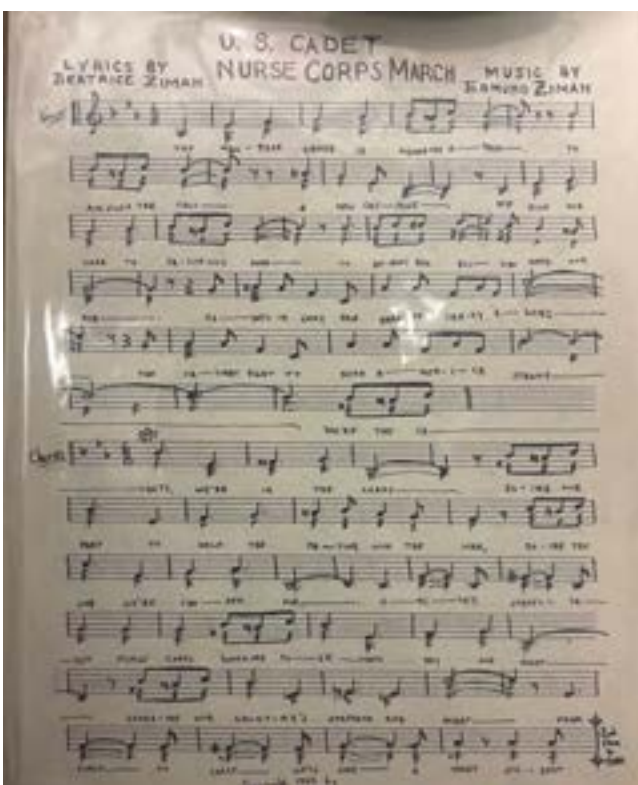


US Cadet Nurse Corps



U.S. Cadet Nurse Corps Poster

The U.S. Cadet Nurse Corps was established in 1943, during World War II, to recruit women into nursing. The program offered full room, board, and stipend in return for working in a hospital until the end of the war. The program officially ended in 1948; an estimated 125,000 nurses graduated from the program.



Sheet Music for U. S. Cadet Nurse Corps March



US Cadet Nurse Corps



Cadet Nurse Insignia

Copy of the Cadet Nurse Pledge

CADET NURSE PLEDGE

"At this moment of my induction into the United States Cadet Nurse Corps of the United States Public Health Service, I am solemnly aware of the obligations I assume toward my country and toward my chosen profession;

I will follow faithfully the teachings of my instructors and the guidance of the physicians with whom I work;

I will hold in trust the finest traditions of nursing and the spirit of the Corps;

I will keep my body strong, my mind alert, and my heart steadfast;

I will be kind, tolerant, and understanding;

Above all, I will dedicate myself now and forever to the triumph of life over death;

As a Cadet Nurse, I pledge to my country my service in essential nursing for the duration of the war."



Nurses in World War II

Navy Nurse Corps



Invelda M. Artz,
LT, NNC
Items donated by her
niece Anita Wolf

World War II and its Effects (1939-1954)

World War II and its Effects (1939 - 1954)

The global violence of WWII demanded and resulted in new approaches to nursing. Challenges during WWII secured them new highly trained roles and specializations in anesthesiology, psychiatry, and burn treatment. Nurses were in high demand for their skills and were mobilized en masse, serving behind the front lines and in the heart of the action.

The Army Nurse Corps, originally created during WWI, had less than 1000 nurses rostered in 1941 and was insufficient to meet the needs of WWII. Congress issued the Bolton Act in 1943 which offered a streamlined education program for nurses to meet the demand. Over the next 5 years over 150,000 young women were trained in the newly established Cadet Nurse Corps. Unlike in WWI, a partnership with the National Association of Colored Graduate Nurses (NACGN) helped 3,000 Black women become nurses through this program.



Jeanette M. Hays
1888-1960

Milwaukee nurse Jeanette M. Hays (left) had a long career in nursing leadership. Before WWI, she became a public health nurse for tuberculosis, continuing this work at the Red Cross in Paris during WWI. When she returned home, she became the President of the Wisconsin State Nurses Association, carrying it through the turmoil of the Great Depression. During WWII, Hays became the chair of the State Council for War Service, where she coordinated the war effort of Wisconsin nurses. As a spokeswoman for the Interracial Federation, she fervently advocated for racial integration in Milwaukee nursing schools. After the war, Hays became focused on the preservation of the legacy of the nursing profession in Wisconsin.

Nurses in World War II



Army Nurse Corps.

Left: Dress wool green uniform.

Right: Brown/white seersucker work uniform. Worn in China Burma India theater and in North Africa.



Flight jacket. Belonged to Army Nurse Corps flight nurse..

Vietnam and Beyond (1955+)

Vietnam and Beyond (1955+)

Leading up to and throughout the conflict in Vietnam, the practice of nursing and the culture around traditional female roles continued to evolve. Once again, the number of nurses was insufficient for wartime. In 1963, the Army Nurse Corps (ANC) launched Operation Nightingale, a program designed to encourage and promote qualified nurses to participate in conflict overseas. They advertised a "proper, professional and well protected" work environment, one in which women had social equality with men. Both the Army and Navy offered tuition reimbursement for nurses' education.

However, this initiative ended up not bearing the desired results. The ANC continued to struggle with obtaining an adequate number of nurses throughout the Vietnam conflict. Training took a long time, and back in the states there was a renewed feminist fervor. Women were stepping outside of conventional gender roles, with some publicly speaking out against the conflict on the home front. However this did not include all women, as others joined the cause and provided trauma care to the male soldiers fighting against the Viet Cong.

Among those who served during the Vietnam Conflict was UW-Milwaukee's own Dr. Laurie Glass, PhD, RN (at right) who enlisted in the Navy. She was assigned to the National Naval Medical Center in Bethesda, Md., and tasked with assisting injured combat veterans. She served in the Navy Reserves until 1990, and has been a nursing professor here at UW-Milwaukee since 1975. Her naval uniform is part of the Center for Nursing History's collection.



Since Vietnam, nurses training has become more specialized and professionalized. In 1984, UW-Milwaukee became the first university in Wisconsin to offer a PhD in nursing.

Vietnam Era Navy Nurse



US Navy Nurse Corps Uniform, 1971-1984

Black wool dress uniform with the Lt. Commander insignia. The uniform belonged to Professor Emerita Laurie K.Glass who served as a Navy Nurse, 1970-1990.



Vietnam Era Admiral Uniform

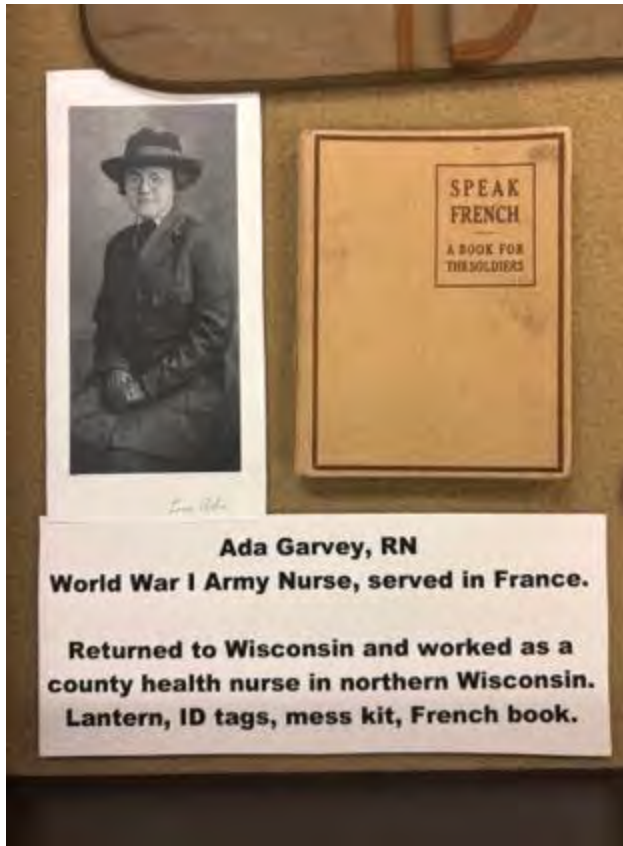


Uniform of UWM Nursing Alumna, Margaret Rykowski

BS 1976, MS 1981

RADM, NC, USNR, Ret
(1987-2013)

Nurses in World War I



Ada Garvey and WWI

Ada Garvey was a World War I Army Nurse ca. 1917-1919, recruited by the Red Cross. Later Garvey would become a Wisconsin county public health nurse. Included in this display are Garvey's 'dog tags,' mess kit, and her scrap book from her "basic training."





World War I Army Nurse Corps



Uniform and Bathing Suit c. 1917-1919

This is a World War I Army Nurse Corps wool uniform and bathing suit.





Frances Cunningham

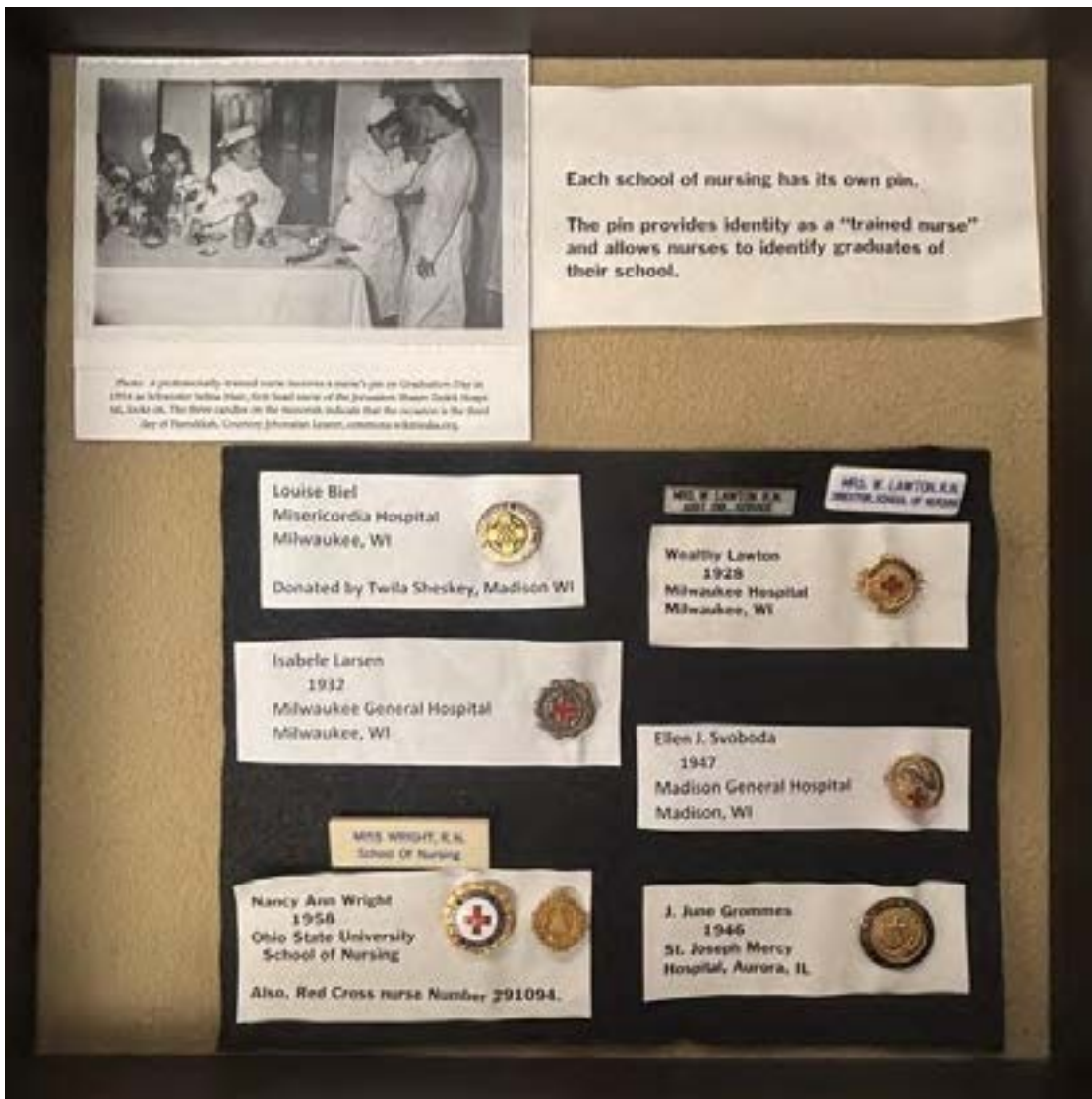


Frances H. Cunningham Case

Frances H. Cunningham was the first and only director of the UW-Madison Division of Nursing at UW-Milwaukee. She was active in facilitating the transition to the School of Nursing at UW-Milwaukee. Cunningham was appointed Associate Dean of the UW-Milwaukee School of Nursing in 1967. Cunningham died in 1970.



Nursing School Pins

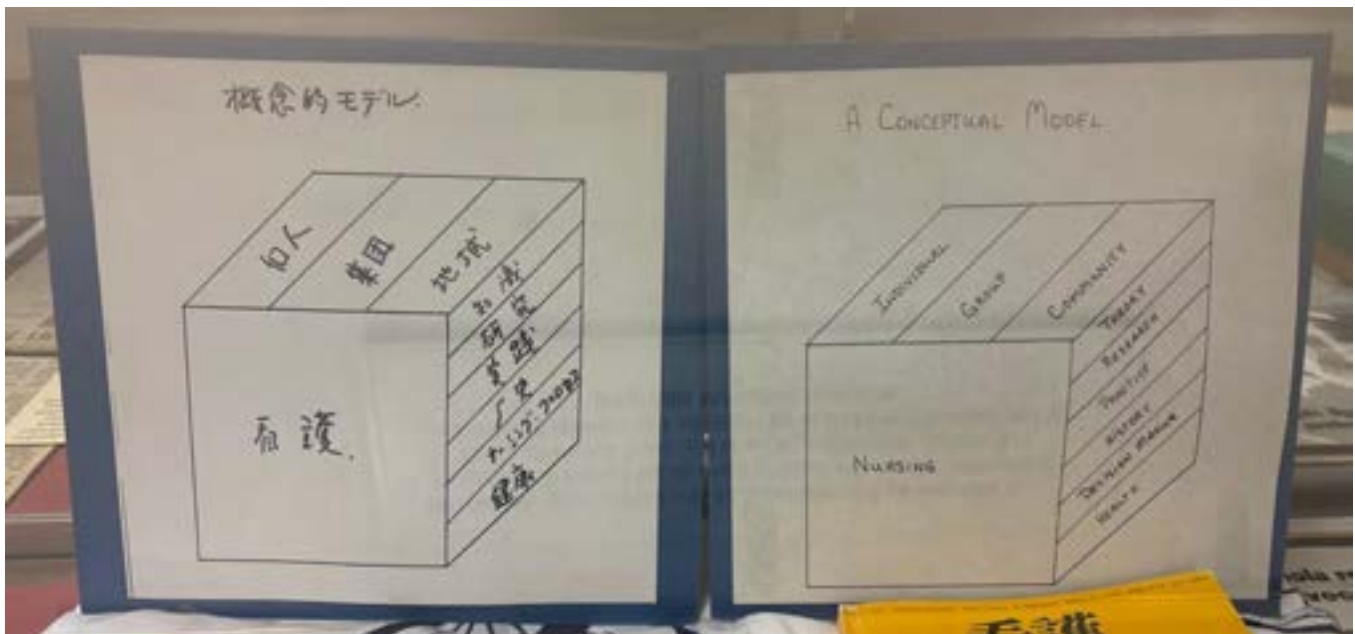


Each school of nursing had their own unique pin. Upon graduating it was an honor to get your pin. No matter where in the world one was working, you knew a graduate of your school when you saw the pin.



International Collaboration

Japan.



A nursing conceptual model, in Japanese on the left, English translation on the right.

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International Collaboration



Faculty involvement in international nursing.



The 4th US-Russian Nursing Conference

The Local Gallery Nursing Education



THE NURSE IN THE GOOD OLD DAYS
(Job description of a Bedside Nurse in an American Hospital in 1887.)

In addition to caring for your 50 patients each bedside nurse will follow these regulations:

1. Daily sweep and mop the floors of your ward, dust the patients' furniture and window sills.
2. Maintain an even temperature in your ward by bringing in a scuttle of coal for the day's business.
3. Light is important to observe the patient's condition. Therefore, each day fill kerosene lamps, clean chimneys, and trim wicks. Wash the windows once a week.
4. The nurse's notes are important in aiding the physician's work. Make your pens carefully. You may whittle nibs to your individual taste.
5. Each nurse on day duty will report every day at 7:00 A.M. and leave at 8 P.M. except on the Sabbath on which day you will be off from 12 Noon to 2:00 P.M.
6. Graduate nurses in good standing with the director of nurses will be given an evening off each week for courting purposes, or two evenings a week if you go regularly to church.
7. Each nurse should lay aside from each pay day a goodly sum of her earnings for her benefits during her declining years, so that she will not become a burden. For example, if you earn \$30 a month you should set aside \$15.
8. Any nurse who smokes, uses liquor in any form, gets her hair done at a beauty shop, or frequents dance halls will give the director of nurses good reason to suspect her worth, intentions, and integrity.
9. The nurse who performs her labors, serves her patients and doctors faithfully and without fault for a period of five years will be given an increase by the hospital administrator of five cents a day providing there are no hospital debts that are outstanding.



Hospital Schools and Nursing Education



Nursing School Uniforms



Nursing School Uniform Capes

These are examples of school-specific capes. Nurses wore these capes as part of their uniforms. Each school of nursing had their own unique uniform, as well as a cap and a pin.

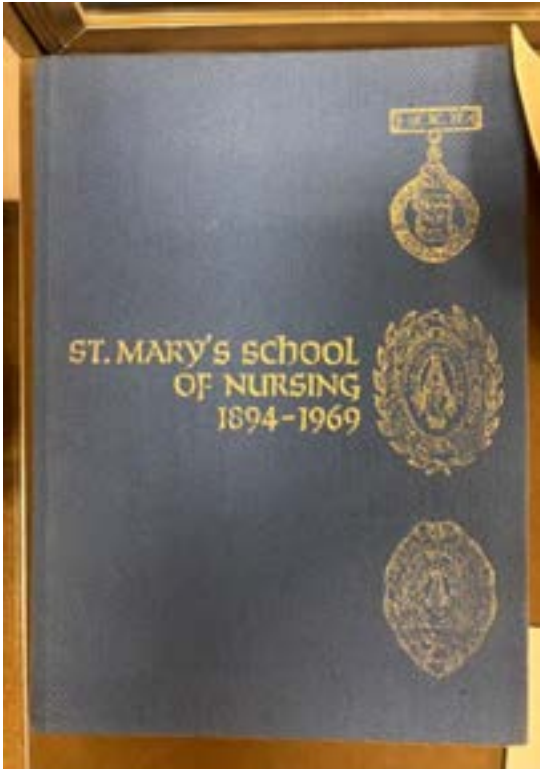
The Center for Nursing history owns more than 40 capes.

St. Mary's Hospital School of Nursing, Milwaukee, WI 1894-1969

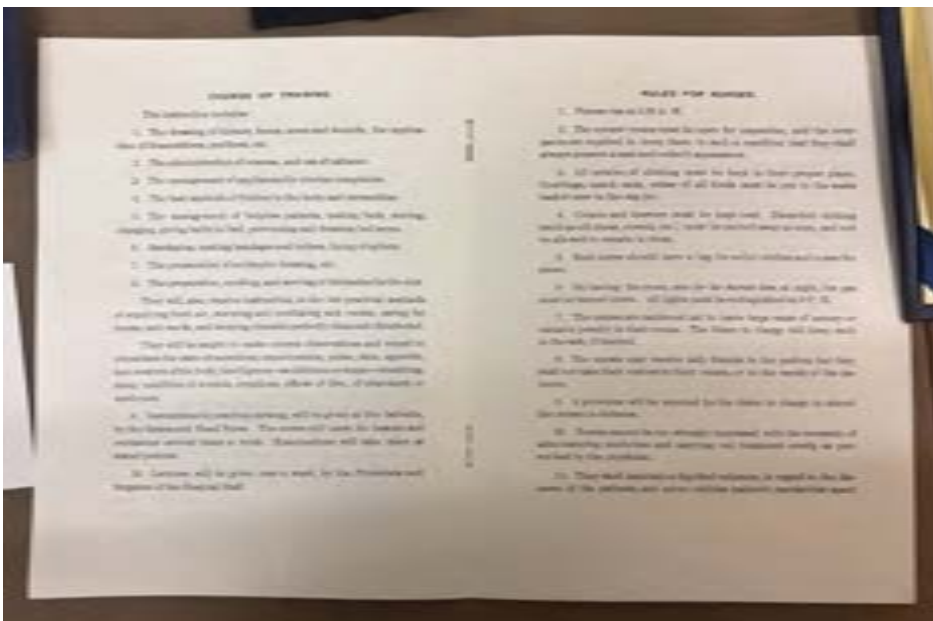


St. Mary's Uniform and cap

St. Mary's Hospital School of Nursing 1894-1969



History and Diploma



Hospital Schools Training and Rules.

Mt. Sinai Hospital School of Nursing, Milwaukee, WI 1914-1973



Diploma, pin and photos.

Uniform and cap





Vintage Artwork



Examples of art work often seen on nursing student dormitory walls.

UW-Milwaukee School of Nursing, est. 1965



UWM School of Nursing
Uniform ca. 1971.
UWM never had a cap.
Schools stopped requiring
that they be worn in the
early 1970s

UWM School of Nursing



Milwaukee Lutheran Hospital School of Nursing, Milwaukee, WI 1903-1973

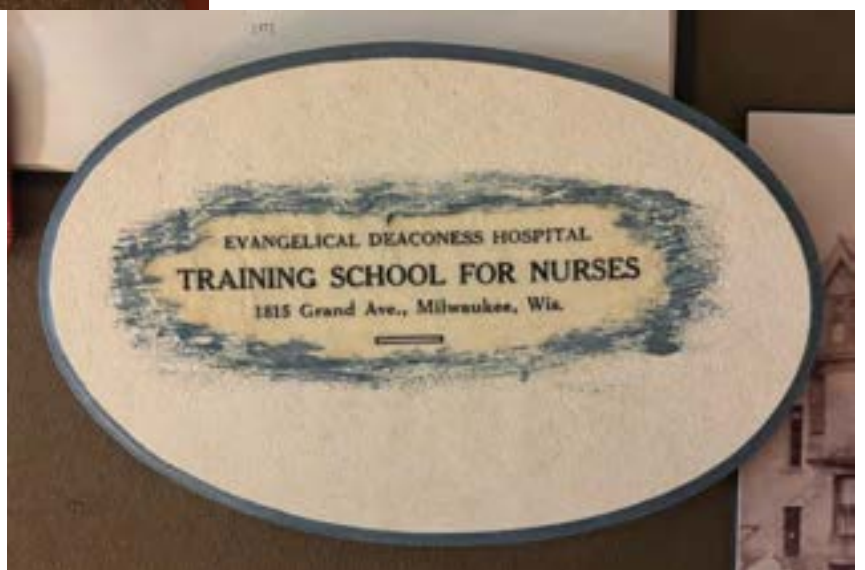


This is a student's uniform from the 1940s-1950s.

Evangelical Deaconess Hospital School of Nursing, Milwaukee, WI 1910-1986



Pant uniforms for women were allowed beginning in the mid 1970s



Evangelical Deaconess Hospital School of Nursing 1910-1986



Yearbook and photos

Columbia Hospital School and College of Nursing.

Knowlton Training School 1901-1909

Columbia Hospital School of Nursing 1909-1982

Carroll Columbia College of Nursing 1982-2005

Columbia-Mt. Mary College of Nursing 2005-2011

Columbia College of Nursing 2011-2020

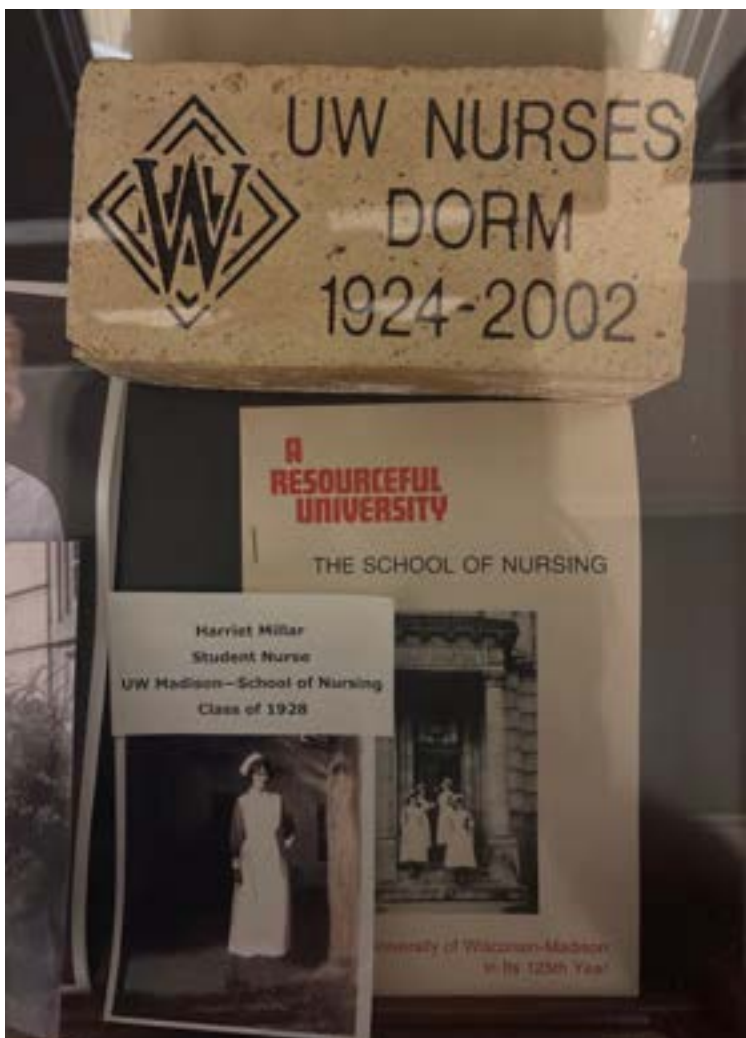




Columbia Hospital School of Nursing

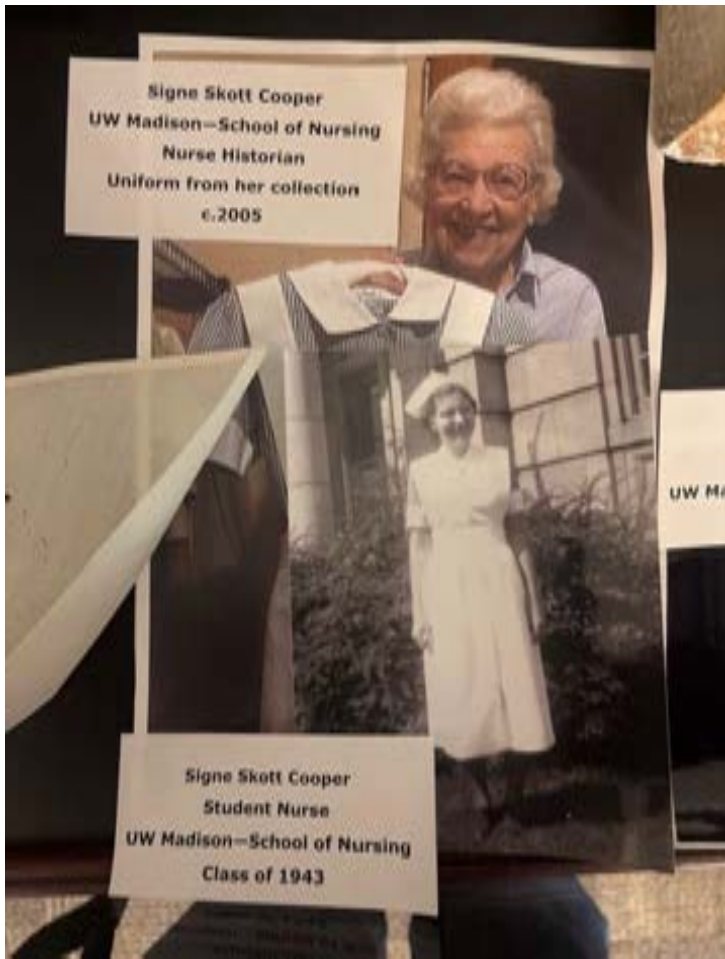


University of Wisconsin- Madison, School of Nursing



The Center for Nursing History houses select items donated by the Madison School of Nursing.

University of Wisconsin-Madison, School of Nursing



Signe Skott Cooper Nursing History Collection. Signe was the leading nurse historian in Wisconsin for 40 years.



UW Madison Uniform ca. 1940s

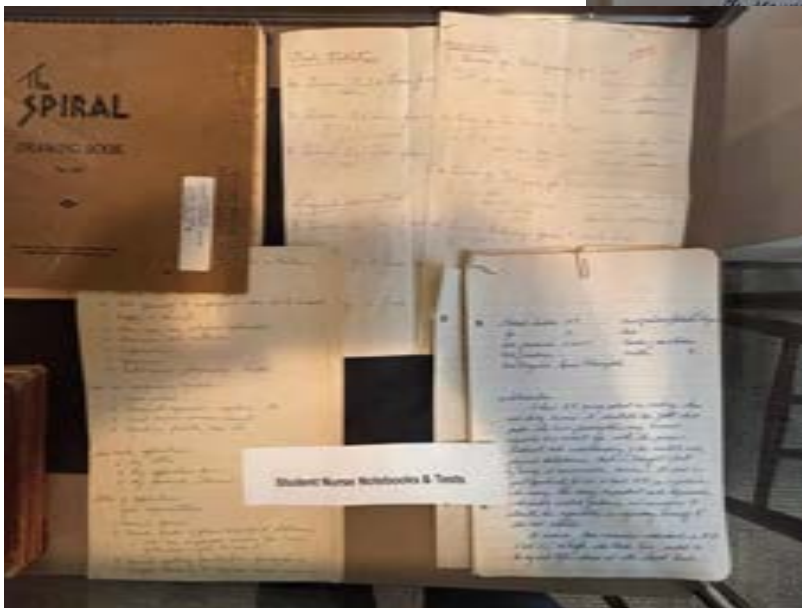
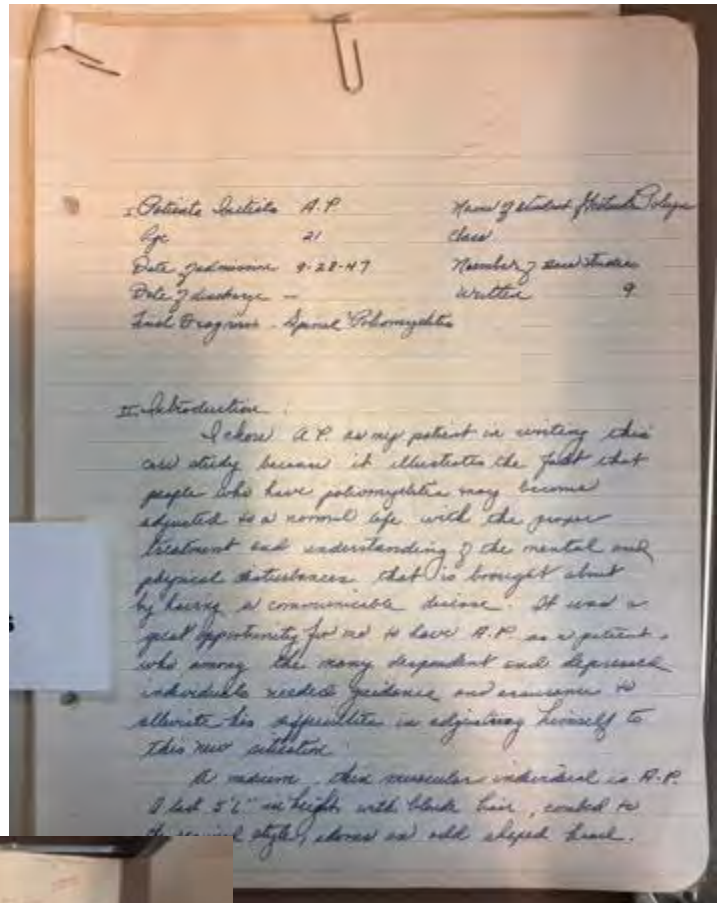
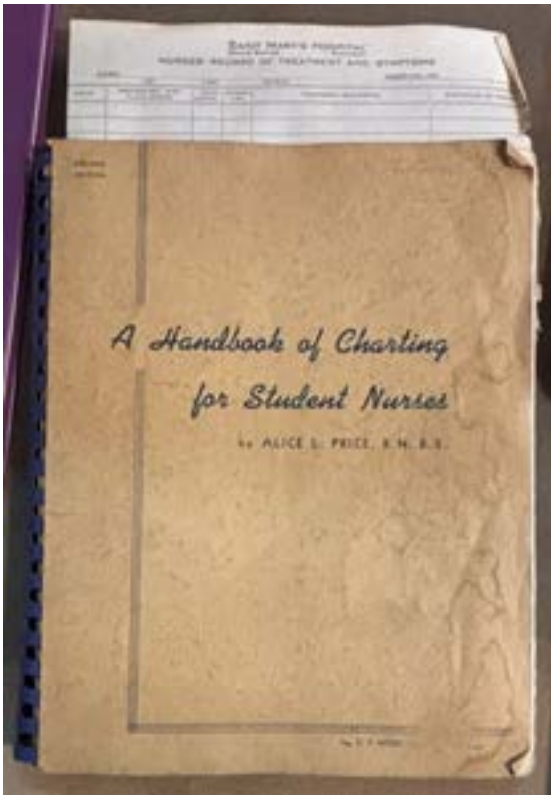
Caps from various schools



A sample of the over 130 caps in the Cooper cap collection.



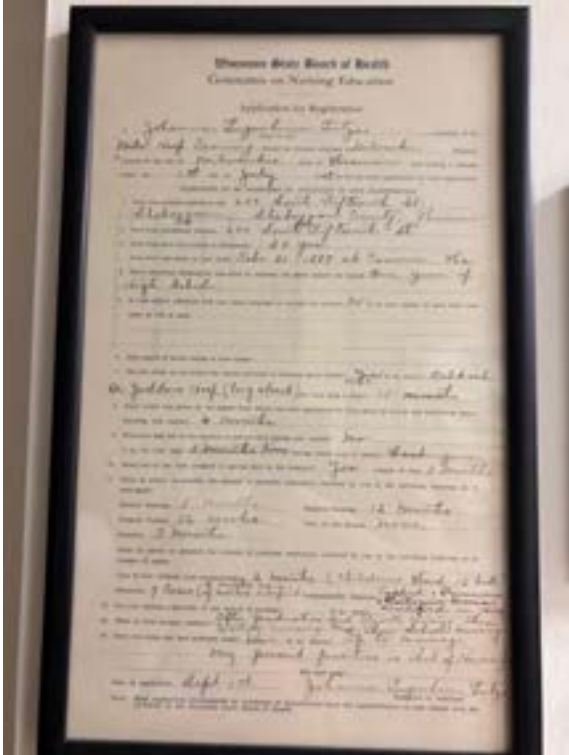
Nursing Education Materials



A sample of the lecture notes and student notes in the collection.



Nursing Licensure and Certification



Gallery 3

Nursing Uniforms

1970-2024

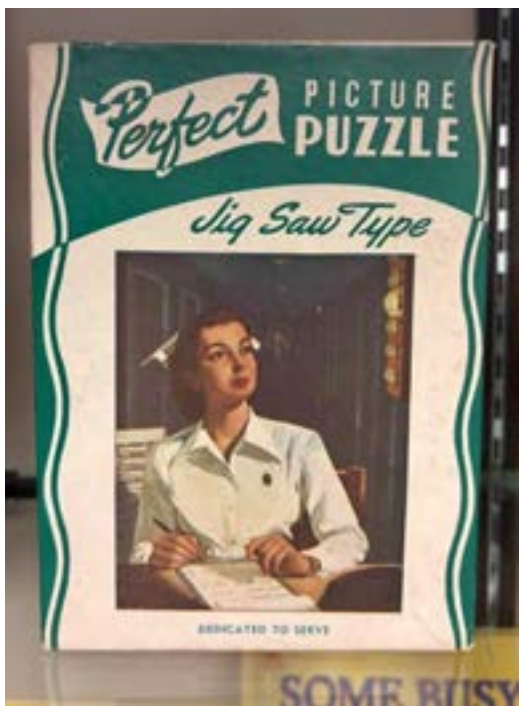


Mens Carroll Columbia uniform top, UW Madison 1970s uniform and UWM 2024 uniform..

Images of Nurses Presented to Children



Images of Nurses Presented to Children

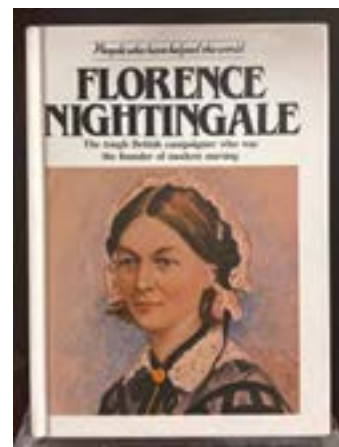


A sample of the puzzles and dolls in the collection.

Notable Nurses



Clara Barton



Florence Nightingale

The American Red Cross



Caps, books, photos and a 1940 uniform.

Original WW I American Red Cross posters.

- 3 of the 5 that the Center for Nursing History owns





Army Nurse Corps during the VietNam War



Vietnam Era Uniforms



Womens Vietnam Memorial Project

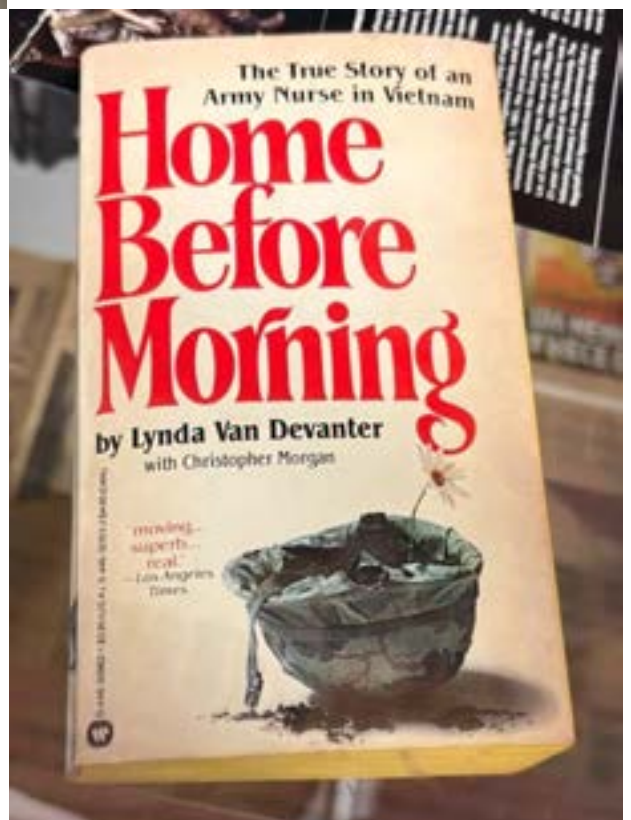
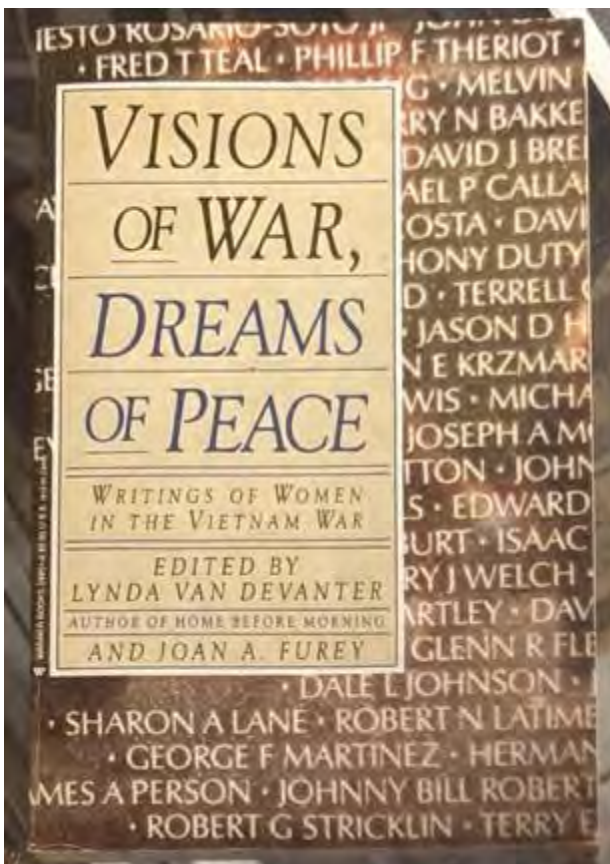


The original design of the monument in Washington DC





A sample of the books written about nurses' experience in VietNam



Tools over Time



Examples of the "tools" nurses have used over 150 years..





Antique Wheelchairs



The 2 on the right are collapsible. The one on the left was used in the 1890s..