

NLN Education Summit 2018

Opening Ceremony: Historical Presentation

Narrator:

The year is 1893; the place: Right here in Chicago, at the World's Fair. The fair celebrated the ideas and innovation that would lead the way to the dawn of a new 20th century. For us, the World's Fair marked the beginning of organized nursing in the US. For us, as members of the NLN, a new world of reform and transformation lay ahead. Nursing was never the same after this.

To set the context, let's go back to 1873 when nurses' training began in America. In that year, three Nightingale influenced schools opened at Bellevue Training School for Nurses in New York, the Connecticut Training School for Nurses at New Haven, and the Boston Training School of Nurses at Massachusetts General Hospital.

For the next two decades, there was tremendous growth in nursing education. The value of trained nurses caring for the sick was recognized by hospitals, who welcomed the free labor of "pupil" nurses. By 1890 there were 35 schools and 1500 pupil nurses. But despite Ms. Nightingale's influence, training schools were being opened without consideration for standards, and curricula lacked rigor and criteria.

Enter Mrs. Bedford Fenwick, of London, who was leading an exhibit at the fair representing British nursing.

Voice Narration:

I am passionate about the need for the development of organized nursing here in the United States. So I persisted and convinced the Hospital and Medical Congress, a physician's group, to form a sub-section on nursing. I asked Isabel Hampton, superintendent at the Johns Hopkins Training School in Baltimore, to gather a group of superintendents of training schools to come to Chicago.

Narrator:

In her own words, Miss Hampton describes that first meeting. Colleagues, please welcome members of the current NLN Board of Governors to describe the times and give voice to the words of our early leader pathfinders.

Words Spoken by Dr. G. Rumay Alexander, President, NLN Board of Governors: The Nurses Congress was held in the Hall of Columbus in the

Women's Building in June 1893, on the 15th, 16th, and 17th of the month. It was attended by 16 superintendents of training schools for nurses. I took this opportunity of suggesting, informally, the formation of the American Society of Superintendents of Training Schools for Nurses, and the idea was cordially received by those to whom it was presented. The discussion was informal and bowed a unanimous feeling in favor of so uniting.

Narrator:

This was the first association of nurses in the United States. It would become the National League of Nursing Education in 1912 at the 18th annual meeting of the society, right here in Chicago, and eventually the National League for Nursing in 1952, at the 56th convention in Atlantic City, New Jersey.

Words spoken by Michael Newsome, NLN Board of Governor

During the early years, the Society faced opposition from physicians who objected to nursing's growing self-governance. The belief, at that time, was that nursing, often considered to be a role women were born to, did not require formal training or education. By forming the Society, the superintendents collectively worked to counteract the external control exerted by those who inhibited the profession's growth; power through organization remained a central, unifying theme. They organized so that each superintendent did not face this opposition alone.

Narrator:

Linda Richards, the first professionally trained American nurse and the first elected President of the Society, addressed this issue at the second annual convention, in 1895.

Words spoken by Dr. Teresa Shellenbarger, Secretary, NLN Board of Governors:

Training school superintendents have a mighty work before them. Instructions in schools must be made more uniform, the standard must be raised, and upon the superintendents rests the duty of having these matters properly adjusted. Women at the head of training schools are today bearing great responsibilities; each one feels this burden. Today I welcome you to the considering of very grave questions, the solution of deep problems which will influence each school represented here, and through these schools, all training schools in America.

Narrator:

Through the efforts of dedicated Superintendents, the Society worked to overcome the tarnished image of the untrained, unkempt, and uneducated nurse. The training

schools sought women who were willing to devote their energies to nursing study and professional growth. An advertisement in the early 20th century proclaimed: “Sentimental Woman Need Not Apply.” The training schools with strong leadership were interested in the quality of life for pupils and graduates and sought better conditions for both, and in so doing made significant contributions to the American’s public health and well-being. Lavinia Dock, through the vivid descriptions in her diary, takes us back to the exemplary leadership of Isabel Hampton at the Johns Hopkins Training School in the early 1900’s:

Words Spoken by Dr. Launette Woolforde, NLN Board of Governors:

I first met Isabel Hampton when she came to the Illinois Training School as Superintendent in July 1896, when I was a probationer. Five years later she offered me the position of her assistant at the Johns Hopkins Training School. The hospital was new, and life in the training school was cheerful and simple. It was Miss Hampton’s custom to read prayers just after breakfast, in the parlor, and with military discipline every nurse attended. We had a hymn, which I played on the piano. Then it was our custom to go with the nurses and pupil nurses to the door and watch them go down the corridor. When I think of the hospital now, it is always this picture that I see: the nurses and pupils in their blue dresses streaming down the corridor, and Miss Hampton, her large eyes radiant with pride and joy in her flock. Almost always, as we turned away, she would say to me, perhaps with a little squeeze of my hand, “Docky, aren’t they nice?”

Narrator:

Caring for and about students, improving the working conditions of pupil nurses and graduates, permeated the early days of the Society. Equally important to the Society was the development of a standard curriculum that advanced theory and practical knowing, and that established the roots of contemporary ethical practice. Finding the right balance between theory and practice challenged the Superintendents. In 1897, at the 4th annual meeting of the Society, President Agnes Brennan called for a new understanding of the theory practice dilemma:

Words Spoken by Dr. Anne Krouse, Treasurer, NLN Board of Governors:

Anyone who has been ill knows that the height of good nursing consists principally in what is done for the patient’s comfort, outside of the regular orders. A theoretical nurse performs her duty in a perfunctory manner and may carry out the doctor’s orders to the letter, but the patient recognizes there is something lacking, and we know that the skilled touch, the deft handling, the keenness to detect changes and symptoms, the ready tact, the patience,

unselfishness, self-reliance, and good judgment can be acquired only by much practice, and a good nurse without these attributes, despite her wide theoretic knowledge will never be a successful one. Theory fortifies the practical, practice strengthens and retains the theoretical.”

Narrator:

This idea was revolutionary, to combine knowledge acquisition and scholarship with practical training, especially in an age when women’s work was not valued and the moral integrity of nurses’ work was not fully established. To balance theory with practice in an emerging yet embryonic nursing curricula would require specialized teacher training. As early as 1897, at the 4th annual meeting of the Society, Isabel Hampton, now Isabel Hampton Robb, expressed her concern.

Words Spoken by Dr. G. Rumay Alexander, President, NLN Board of Governors:

The position of superintendent of nurses requires a woman of executive ability, education, tact, refinement, and keen perceptions; it is so important that she should have had a thorough course in the theory of her work. But a woman might possess all of these qualities and still be at a disadvantage when undertaking her first school, due to lack of preparation for teaching.

Narrator:

Enter M. Adelaide Nutting, head of the Society’s education committee. Together, she and Isabel Hampton Robb were a force. Together, they set out to find a university to prepare superintendents to teach. Colleagues, this was extraordinary. Women, especially nurses, did not go to College. Yet the course in hospital economics began at Teacher’s College, Columbia University, in 1899. In 1923, on the occasion of the 30th anniversary of the Society, now the National League for Nursing Education, M. Adelaide Nutting spoke of this transformative moment:

Words Spoken by Dr. Linda Moneyham, NLN Board of Governors:

One is tempted to wonder if the decisive moment in our educational progress may not have come unseen and unrecognized on the day when part of the education of nurses passed out beyond the hospital and into the University – the day when Isabel Hampton, with the support of the Society’s Educational Committee prevailed upon Dean James Russell of Teachers College, Columbia University, to open its doors to graduate nurses to lay the foundation for the training of teachers and public health nurses.

Narrator:

The partnership with Teachers College paved the way for new thinking about the education of nurses.

Words Spoken by Mark Vogt, NLN Board of Governors:

Although it was clear that a training school could not exist without a hospital, it became apparent to the Superintendents that affiliation with universities was a better way to prepare their pupils. The Society looked forward to the day when nursing education was situated within the university. At the 36th Annual Convention of the National League for Nursing Education, in 1930, Annie Goodrich, who had been a member of the educational committee that first spoke to Dean Russell and then led the Teachers College program, spoke to the delegates, seven years after she assumed the position of Yale University's Inaugural Dean.

Words Spoken by Dr. Ann Marie Mauro, NLN Board of Governors:

We shall never render our full service to the community until our place is found also in the university. We must require of our women in the future two languages, the language of the people and the language of science. That nurses have learned the language of the people is evidenced by the group meeting here today. But if we are truly concerned with our field of work we must speak also the language of science. ...

Narrator:

By 1930, so much had been accomplished.

Words Spoken by Dr. John Lundeen, NLN Board of Governors:

Most nursing programs were three years in length and the curriculum had been modified to reflect emerging specialties. In 1917, the first standard curriculum had been developed by the Education Committee under Adelaide Nutting and would be revised in 1927 and guidelines developed in 1937. Also, now most programs were three years in length and the curriculum had been modified to reflect emerging specialties. Educators received a post-training certificate and were using new teaching methods. There were laws regulating the practice of nursing on the statute books of most states. The Society, and now the National League for Nursing Education, had led a movement to reform health care by bringing excellence and integrity to nursing education.

Narrator:

Extraordinary leadership is the essence of this story. Throughout the history of the National League for Nursing, the influence of our leaders in accomplishing reform of nursing and nursing education cannot be minimized. In 1900 Lillian Wald spoke

eloquently about the powerful role of women, and nurses, to achieve public health reform. She spoke candidly at the 6th annual meeting of the Society.

Words Spoken by Dr. Patricia Yoder-Wise, President-Elect, NLN Board of Governors:

There is one subject that as citizens we shall have to undertake, in the interest of all as well as for our profession, and that is to help on civil service reform. This one idea I wish above all to bring out, that among the many opportunities for civic and altruistic work pressing on all sides, nurses having superior advantage in their practical training should not rest content with being only nurses, but should use their talents wherever possible in reform and civic movements.

Narrator:

In 1904, Lavinia Dock asked members of the Society if the Society is a moral force, a public conscience. She passionately believed in the power of the Society to effect social change. She asked, To what extent is the Society an influence? To what extent does it affect the public? Lavinia Dock believed that the Society would often be astonished at the actual extent of its influence, if its present unsuspected power were actually to be systematically exerted, in her words, in an intelligent and energetic manner.

Power, by its very nature, has been an ongoing theme throughout the history of nursing. Solidarity and organization were foundational in the early years of the Society. Throughout the history of the NLN, our leader pathfinders sought to surface the collective power of nurses and the emerging nursing profession to leverage educational and social reform. There are so many stories to illustrate this legacy. Yet none, we think, more powerful than the story told by Mary Elizabeth Carnegie about her experiences in the 1940s and 1950s. Dr. Carnegie, living legend, educator, author, reformer, and unceasing champion of racial equality in nursing sat down with Dr. Sandra Lewenson in 2001 at the NLN and recounted her leadership journey:

Words Spoken by Dr. Beverly Malone, CEO, NLN:

When I went to Florida A & M as Dean, and the state board had a conference in Jacksonville at a hotel and invited me to present my rotation plan so I went in the morning and I presented my plan....It came time for lunch and I could not sit and eat with them. They put me way over in the corner by myself and I couldn't eat. So I left there and went back to the campus; I said I'm not going back there; I'm not going to be embarrassed; I'm not going to do it. And one older faculty member, he taught chemistry, I remember Mr. Tenner well. He said Dean, that's what they want you to do. They don't want you back there, so you're playing right in their hands when you say I'm not going back. You are

going back again and again. It was up to me to take the leadership role and really fight for real integration, not just on paper. You never win by staying away.

Narrator:

The strong and determined voices of our leaders resonate throughout the history of the NLN. Their words, spoken so eloquently by our current leaders, the NLN Board of Governors, fully recognized that nursing, as a profession, needed to embrace its emerging status and make public its strong foundational mission to lift the human spirit and influence social reform.

Ours is a powerful history, a history that belongs to all of us. In the early days of the Society, despite the need to accommodate to the political realities of the time, educational standards were put in place, suitable criteria for quality, leading to accreditation were established and affiliation with university schools to nurture pedagogical expertise were realized. What is most striking is that the issues of the past: quality curricula, pedagogical excellence, ethical and safe practice, “negative isms” including racism and misogyny, and those of the present are amazingly aligned.

In the spirit of Isabel Hampton Robb, Lavinia Dock, Adelaide Nutting, Lilian Wald, Agnes Brennan, Annie Goodrich, Isabel Stewart, and Mary Elizabeth Carnegie, we are called to walk in their footsteps, to act with purpose and tenacity to co-create a transformative future for the NLN, for nursing education, and for the nursing profession.

Colleagues, 125 years later, as we gather once again in Chicago, we stand in awe of the wisdom, grace and foresight of our past leaders. And just as our early leaders banded together to reform nursing education and create a preferred future for the nursing profession, we look to the future with determination and optimism. Our profound legacy of leadership, diversity of thought and perspective, and caring commitment to the human spirit is ours to nurture and flourish.

We are the NLN; and like our early leaders, united in our work, we share a commitment to act for, with, and on behalf of our students, our faculty peers, our staff, our interprofessional colleagues and the patients we are privileged to care for every day.

As we look to our future, we embrace our core values of caring, integrity, diversity, and excellence, values that were so much a part of our early history. It is upon this foundation that we fully embrace a transformative future.

