



A Look Back At The NC Association Of Colored Graduate Nurses

By: **Dr. Phoebe Pollitt, RN**

Abstract

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A Look Back at the NC Association of Colored Graduate Nurses

By NCNA Member, Dr. Phoebe Pollitt, RN; Nursing History Council Member

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Seeking the benefits of a professional organization, a group of African American nurses, led by Martha Franklin of Philadelphia, met in New York in 1908 and formed the National Association of Colored Graduate Nurses (NACGN). The purposes of the organization were to promote the professional advancement of nurses, to elevate the standards of nursing education, and to establish a code of nursing ethics.

Charlotte Rhone was the only RN from North Carolina to attend the founding meeting of the NACGN. Five North Carolina nurses attended the 1920 NACGN annual convention in Washington, DC. Carrie Early Broadfoot of Fayetteville called the North Carolina nurses together and suggested they establish a state chapter of the NACGN.

Upon their return to North Carolina, they wrote and spoke to as many nurses as possible about the benefits of having an organization. Their hard work paid off.



Carrie Early Broadfoot

The first meeting of the North Carolina Colored Graduate Nurses Association (NCCGNA) was held in January 1923 in Winston-Salem, North Carolina. Broadfoot was elected president, a post she held for the next 8 years. A second meeting was held in Raleigh later the same year with 35 nurses participating. By 1949, membership had grown to 269.

The NCCGNA offered opportunities for professional growth. Members rotated leadership positions, attended and coordinated state and national conferences, lobbied politicians about health and nursing concerns and took turns representing North Carolina on the NACGN Executive Board.

In addition, NCCGNA members participated in events sponsored by groups such as National Negro Health Week, the

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— Elizabeth McMillan Thomson,
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American Red Cross, and the Anti-Tubercular Society. Leaders of the NCCGNA and the NCNA met throughout the 1940s and the organizations merged in 1949.

Maria B. Noell, executive secretary of the NCNA, praised the actions of the NCCGNA saying:

Since all citizens of North Carolina need adequate nursing care and since the professional nursing organizations are to a great degree responsible for such care. I believe the action taken this morning by the N.C. Association of Negro Registered Nurses, Inc. to dissolve its organization of 27 years standing and to associate itself wholly with the North Carolina State Nurses' Association will be a great asset in promoting nursing service for all North Carolinians.

Elizabeth McMillan Thomson, President of NCCGNA in 1949, closed the last meeting of the organization with these words:

The final chapter has been written by the North Carolina Association of Negro Registered Nurses, Inc., but the activities of nurses and nursing must go on. As professional women, we all have a great part to play in furthering the progress and elevating the standards of this work. The integrating of the associations gives opportunity for great service, and by so doing, humanity will be better served. ■