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Let's Start At The Very Beginning

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

Abstract

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Let's Start at the Very Beginning

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

In September, Meka Douthit EL was installed as the 55th president of your North Carolina Nurses Association. This seems like a good time to look back at some of the first of her 54 predecessors!

Mary Lewis Wyche (1858-1936)

First President of NCNA, 1902-1907

Mary Lewis Wyche was born in Vance County, NC, in 1858. After fulfilling many family responsibilities, she graduated from Philadelphia General Hospital School of Nursing in 1894. Moving to Raleigh after graduation, Wyche founded the Rex Hospital Training School for Nurses, the first nursing school in the state.

In 1901-1902 Wyche organized the North Carolina State Nurses Association. Through NCNA's efforts the North Carolina General Assembly passed the country's first nurse registration law in March 1903. When the NC Board of Nursing was formed after the registration law passed, Wyche served on the board for six years.

Another successful project was creating a home in Black Mountain, Dunnwycche, for tubercular/sick nurses. In 1925 she retired and returned to her family home near Henderson, where she wrote *The History of Nursing in North Carolina*. She was an active member of the Methodist church.

Constance Pfohl (1870-1959)

Second President of NCNA, 1908-1913

Constance Pfohl was born in Winston-Salem in 1870. After graduating from St. Luke's Hospital School of Nursing in Bethlehem, PA, in 1895 she returned home to practice private duty nursing.

Pfohl was a leader in organized nursing in North Carolina from the very beginning. She was a founding member of NCNA and served as its Secretary from 1903-1907 and then as its second President from 1908-1913. From 1904-1908 she also served as President of the NC Board of Nursing. In 1910 she organized the first Red Cross chapter in the state. In her retirement she remained active in community organizations and the Moravian church in Salem.

Cleone Hobbs (1872-1940)

Third President of NCNA, 1914-1916

Cleone Hobbs was born in Clinton, NC, in 1872 and graduated from the St. Luke's Hospital School of Nursing in Bethlehem,

PA in 1897. From 1900-1907 she was the only nurse at Women's College (now UNC Greensboro) where she also taught courses in hygiene and physiology. Hobbs was a founding member of NCNA. She served on the Board of Nursing from 1904-1908 and then as its President from 1909-1912. Soon after, she served as President of NCNA from 1914-1916.

Hobbs served in the US Army Nurse Corps in World War I. After the War, she was the first nurse hired by the state of North Carolina to be a traveling school nurse, crossing the state inspecting children in grades 1-7, a position she held for over 20 years. She spent her retirement years in Charlotte and died there in 1940.

L. Eugenia Henderson (1875 - 1961)

Fourth President of NCNA, 1917-1919

L. Eugenia Henderson was born in Charlotte in 1874 and graduated from the Maryland University Hospital School of Nursing in Baltimore in 1901. She returned to North Carolina to be the nurse for Salem College in Winston-Salem, from 1901-1907. Her next position was as Superintendent of both the hospital and school of nursing at Twin Cities Hospital, the first hospital in Winston-Salem. After moving back to Charlotte, she served as Superintendent of Presbyterian Hospital.

Henderson was a founding member of the NCNA and served as its treasurer and later its fourth president from 1917-1919. She was also a member of the Board of Nursing from 1912-1914. Henderson passed away in Charlotte in 1961.

Are you interested in joining the Nursing History Council? We would love to have you! NCNA members are welcome to join any council they wish. To change your council status, simply update your Member Profile at www.ncnurses.org or email LaurenZahn@ncnurses.org.

The opinions expressed in this article are the author's own and do not necessarily reflect the view of the North Carolina Nurses Association or its board of directors. ■