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The Second Generation Of NCNA Leaders

By: **Phoebe Pollitt, RN**

Abstract

We highlighted the first four presidents of NCNA in the Special Fall 2021 issue of the *Tar Heel Nurse*. Those nursing leaders, Mary Wyche, Constance Pfohl, Cleone Hobbs, and Eugenia Henderson, founded an organization, helped pass the first nursing registration law in the country, lobbied to allow the NC Board of Nursing to set standards for nursing schools, organized nurses to join the armed forces during WWI, and fought the deadly 1918 flu pandemic. New challenges lay ahead for NCNA's next presidents.

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The Second Generation of NCNA Leaders

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

We highlighted the first four presidents of NCNA in the Special Fall 2021 issue of the Tar Heel Nurse. Those nursing leaders, Mary Wyche, Constance Pfohl, Cleone Hobbs, and Eugenia Henderson, founded an organization, helped pass the first nursing registration law in the country, lobbied to allow the NC Board of Nursing to set standards for nursing schools, organized nurses to join the armed forces during WWI, and fought the deadly 1918 flu pandemic. New challenges lay ahead for NCNA's next presidents.

Blanche Stafford (1882-1945) Fifth and Eighth President of NCNA, 1920, 1924, 1925

Blanche Stafford was born into a large family in Salem, NC. She attended local schools and graduated from the University of Pennsylvania Hospital School of Nursing in 1905. She became a private duty nurse and served families in Forsyth County for 40 years until her death in 1945. Stafford was very active in professional nursing at the local, state, and national levels. She served on the NCNA Board of Directors for many years, as Secretary for two terms and President for three: 1920, 1924 and 1925. Stafford represented NCNA at numerous ANA meetings, giving talks and serving on national nursing committees. In addition to chairing the legislative committee for the NCNA, she raised funds and served on the Board of Directors for Dunnwyche, the NCNA home for ill and tubercular nurses. She also chaired the state Red Cross Nursing Service from 1922 until her death in 1945. In her book, *A History of Nursing in North Carolina*, Mary L. Wyche noted, "She is a friend to mankind and a faithful servant to the nurses of North Carolina." Dorothy Bernice Thomas Conyers (1877-1972)

Sixth President of NCNA, 1921, 1922 Dorothy Bernice Thomas Conyers

Dorothy Conyers was born in Guilford County, NC. She graduated in the first class of the St. Leo's Hospital School of Nursing in Greensboro in 1907. She practiced private duty nursing until she joined the Red Cross and served overseas in WWI. Conyers was awarded 4 Bronze Stars for her work in evacuation hospital operating rooms near the front lines in Baccrot, France, and Coblenz, Germany. After the War, she continued to work for the Red Cross as Guilford County's first public health nurse. She set up an emergency hospital and trained lay people to assist in caring for patients with the "Spanish Flu." Later, she was the Superintendent of Nurses at the Sternberger Women and Children's Hospital in Greensboro. She served on the Board of Directors of NCNA before her election as President in 1921. After her presidential tenure, she served for eight years on the Board of Nursing Examiners (1923-1930) and as Secretary of the Standardization Board, overseeing and accrediting nursing schools throughout the state in the 1930s. Dorothy Conyers died in 1972.

Meno Pearl Weaver (1879-1969) Seventh President of NCNA, 1923

Meno Pearl Weaver was born in the Reems Creek section of Buncombe County. She earned a teaching certificate from nearby Weaver College and taught in a local high school until she left for the University of Maryland's Nurse Training School in Baltimore. After graduation, she became the first school nurse in Asheville, and one of the first in the state. She also began visiting the sick in her role with the Associated Charities of Asheville. During WWI, Weaver joined the Army Nurse Corps and served on the front lines in France, eventually earning the rank of Captain. After the war, she graduated from Simmons College in

Boston with advanced training in public health. She returned to North Carolina continuing work for the Red Cross and then for the State Department of Health supporting nurses working in tuberculosis control, school nursing, and midwife training programs in 50 western counties. She served as Vice President of NCNA twice and was elected 7th President in 1923. After 35 years of nursing she retired to her family home in Reems Creek. She died in 1969 at the Oteen Veterans Administration Hospital in Asheville.