

**The Easton Hospital School of Nursing  
65th Alumni Banquet  
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May 10, 1991**

Easton Hospital started a one year nursing program in 1901. It quickly expanded into a two year program, and only six years later, in 1907, the hospital further extended it to encompass three years. This program remained in tact until 1975 when the last nursing class was graduated. A few weeks ago I interviewed Ada Hildebrant Lyons, our oldest living graduate, who celebrated her 101st birthday April 28, 1991.

In 1907 seventeen year old Ada Hildebrant, who attended High Bridge High School, went to the doctor's to pick up medication for her sick grandmother. The doctor asked her if she had ever thought of becoming a nurse. He had received word that Easton Hospital was looking for nursing students from the country, because country girls wouldn't think they "knew it all" before they entered training.

A week later Ada went to Easton Hospital to apply for admission to the nursing program. She was told that students would not be accepted until the fall; however, two weeks later she received word to report to the hospital immediately. At this time both the hospital and the school of nursing were under the supervision of the German Lutheran Nursing Sisters.

Part of the nurses' training included caring for hospital patients immediately after the trainees' acceptance. They worked twelve hour shifts with one hour off each afternoon. It was a residential program and Ada told me she was very homesick. In addition to having to live in the nurses' home, the young women were required to attend church services, which were held every Sunday afternoon.

Nurses were to wear their hair straight back, with no curls or waves. One day Ada reported to work with her hair curled. She immediately was sent back to the nurses' residence to wash her hair before she was allowed to assume her duties in the hospital.

Nursing students were not allowed to speak to the interns. Classes were taught by the doctors. Ada spoke highly of a Doctor Green because he was willing to explain procedures and answer the students' questions. The operating room experience starting with picking up sponges and progressed to assisting during surgery. The nursing students were alone on night duty and there were no orderlies to assist them. If a patient died during the night shift, the nurses were very scared when they had to take



the body to the basement morgue, especially if there were already a body down there.

Following her graduation in 1910, Ada did private duty both at the hospital and in homes in Easton. Then she worked for a short time at New Jersey Zinc Works in Mauch Chunk, Pennsylvania. Ada Hildebrant married and returned to High Bridge as Ada Lyons. She started the first aid department at the Taylor-Wharton Foundry in the early 1930's.

Bertha Hoff entered training at Saint Mary's Hospital in Brooklyn, New York in 1911. She chose Saint Mary's because a friend of hers had graduated from there and also because she had an aunt and cousins who lived in Brooklyn. After only two months she received word that she must come home to Phillipsburg because her mother had become very ill due to her daughter's absence. Bertha returned to Phillipsburg and eventually continued her training at Easton Hospital. Information about her course of studies is evident from the notes she saved. Anatomy was taught by Dr. Thomas Zulick, Sr. Arterial circulation and the parts of the heart were also studied. The skeletal system with the naming of the bones was another unit that she learned. The following questions are taken from a test that was given to the junior class on June 2, 1913:

1. Name three common remedies derived from each of the three great kingdoms: animal, vegetable and mineral.
2. What would you suggest as the best time to give Espon Salts and why?
3. What would you do in case of carbolic acid and laudanum poisoning?

A nurse's main function was to give good bedside care. They were also responsible for the housekeeping duties on their units. Nurses were taught to take temperatures, pulse rates and respiration, but the taking of blood pressures was a function the doctors performed.

Nurses were not allowed to marry while in training. Bertha Hoff added Stout to her name on November 21, 1914, marrying one of her former patients. Although she had officially graduated in June of 1914, she still had training time to finish in order to complete her nursing requirements. Consequently, she wore her wedding ring on a chain around her neck.

Following the completion of her training, Bertha chose not to pursue a career in nursing. On December 21st, 1916, my sister Ruth was born. With the flu outbreak of 1917 and 1918 all area nurses were requested to work. However, my mother did not go. Two weeks later, because of the

critical shortage of nurses, Dr. Barber came to her house and informed Bertha that she must go to work. She was assigned to care for people in their homes and she did not have the right to refuse this assignment, because Bertha's mother was available to care for Ruth. After the flu crisis passed, Bertha returned to being a housewife and mother and did not go back to nursing until 1934, after the death of my father.

If my mother had not transferred to Easton Hospital to complete her training, no doubt, someone else would be standing before you tonight discussing the early years of the Easton Hospital School of Nursing.