Welcome to Online Office Hours!

We’ll get started at 2PM ET
Welcome! We’re glad you’re here! Use the chat box to introduce yourselves. Let us know:

- Your first name
- Where you’re joining us from
- Grade level(s) and subject(s) you teach
Calling the Shots:
American Nursing During the Interwar Period

Keely Shaw and Liza Whitfield
Junior Fellows at the Library of Congress
Learning and Innovation Office
Summer 2020
Hi there! I’m a New Orleans native who graduated from Loyola University New Orleans in May with a BA in History. My research interests lie primarily in New Orleans history and medical history. I’ll be discussing our newspaper articles and pictures today.
Born and raised in Texas, I currently live in San Angelo, Texas. I’m a rising senior here at Angelo State University where I study history with a focus on gender and sexuality. I’ll be talking about film and interviews we uncovered in our work.
Epidemiology and gender studies lead to... what, exactly?
- How and why did nursing change after World War I? Why did public nursing grow in prominence during the interwar years?
- In what way did the role of women in the medical field during this period both challenge and reinforce extant gender norms?
- How did nursing continue to develop and change during the interwar period?
The Forgotten Frontier, The Frontier Nursing Service, 1930

https://www.loc.gov/item/mbrs00062166/
Mrs. Martin, Public Health Nurse

Interview of Mrs. Walter Herbert by Muriel Mann in February of 1939.

...case a temperature was 103 degrees. If he had not been called I would have telephoned an ambulance and taken them to the hospital immediately, but public health nurses never interfere when a regular doctor has been called. The child has double pneumonia. It is a pathetic case, though only one of many."

https://www.loc.gov/item/wpalh002093/
"I Ain't No Midwife"

Interview of Mary Willingham by Sadie Hornsby in June of 1939.

"Lemme see now, since 1924," she answered. "You know I ain't no midwife; I'se a practical nurse. I'se holped doctors and midwives, and I'se maided and cooked. Lord, have mercy! I had to spend my money fast as I could git it feedin' my famly, payin' house rent, and for all the things I told that man what asked so many questions at the 'Pleyment Office. I got my 'stificate to do practical nursin' in 1928. It took me 2 years to git it. It used to be anybody could wait on a 'oman havin' a baby; they could go ahead and cut the cord and tie it if they knew how. Now, that's all changed. If you don't have that 'stificate they'll put you in the penitentiary for life. I hopes to git my next 'stificate in 'bout another year, and then I can call myself a midwife and pull down git a week. Then I won't have to worry 'bout my rent and bread no mo'; leastwise not long as 'oman keeps on havin' babies. I seems to save up for a rainy day when I does git to makin' what a midwife should.

"I don't know when I was born 'cause I didn't know nothin' 'til I was a little girl. I reccomends seein' my pa all right enough. I can guess at my age, but I really don't know how old I is. I tell everybody that. I expect I will be 'most forty-nine my next birthday. I was born on a farm down here in Clarke County, and all I ever done in my younger days mostly was work in the field. I've just been in town 'bout sixteen years. I used to have time and money to go see my folks, but I don't no mo'. Like I done told you, my ma died when I was a baby. My sister raised me part
Nurse Marguerite White showing Alice Jane Holden, tuberculosis patient, how to make her own paper cups which can be burned after use in her home on La Delta Project. Thomastown, Louisiana

June 1940

https://www.loc.gov/item/2017803188/
“Frontier’ Nurses Bring Education and Health to Hill Folk”

The Evening Star, January 17, 1940

“Mrs. Breckinridge more than 10 years ago began her ‘frontier service’ on horseback, covering more than 800 miles of rough mountain country. She lived in cabins with the mountaineers, ate their food, talked crops, but meanwhile kept an eye on the near impossible odds the people faced. Surmounting obstacles, she finally gained confidence of the hill folk and changed their feeling to that of co-operation and active friendship.”
“Flickering Dimples and ‘Movie Queen’ Beauty Not Needed to Make Good Nurses, Says Chief”

-The Evening Telegram (New York) June 15, 1918

Quote from Mrs. L. S. Higbee, “Chief of the Navy Nurse Corps at Washington, D.C.”
“Little Nurse Home From War Horrors is Anxious to Go Back”

-New York Tribune, May 4, 1918

“For, after all, she says one gets used to the din-- you can tell a 9.2 from a 6 inch shell every time-- and horsemeat isn’t so bad if you’ve worked ten hours at a stretch.”
St. Louis Red Cross Motor Corps on duty Oct. 1918 Influenza epidemic.

https://www.loc.gov/item/2011661525/
Red Cross Poster: “The Public Health Nurse She Answers Humanity’s Call: Your Red Cross Membership makes her work possible”

https://www.loc.gov/item/00652153/
“If being an angel is to do what you’ve done Little girl of the cross then you surely are one. Risking your life Amid battle’s strife, making lives new, nursing them through You are sweetheart and mother to sad hearts that yearn you brighten their sweet dreams of home—fires that burn you were sent from above on a mission of love, I never believed in angels until I met you.”
Possible uses?
Feel free to share your ideas!
Thank you!

Questions? Post them in the chat box!