Almost one hundred years ago on January 1, 1889 the Cincinnati Training School for Nurses opened establishing a new profession for the women of Cincinnati. The impetus for the school did not arise from the hospital's medical staff or its trustees but instead from a group of prominent women in the city who, with the help of Dr. Nathaniel P. Dandridge, convinced the hospital's officials of the merits of trained nurses. Led by Dr. Mary Osborne, sponsors including Mrs. William Howard Taft, Mrs. John A.

She met every emergency with knowledge and unruffled spirit. To the physician she proved an invaluable assistant, executing his orders intelligently, and recording accurately the various symptoms as they were developed. She watched the temperature of the room as closely as she did that of the patient, and while always polite and obliging, was never obsequious.

Gano, Miss Annie Laws, and others were determined to provide systematic instruction for middle class young women in the care of the sick.¹

The Cincinnati women were not alone in their belief that nursing was a profession involving specialized skills and especially suitable for women. The first formal training program for nurses in this country was initiated at the New England Hospital for Women and Children under the leadership of Dr. Marie Zakrezewska and her close friend and colleague, Dr. Elizabeth Blackwell. Almost a decade passed before another training school opened in 1873 at Bellevue Hospital in New York City, where some upper class women managed, but only with great difficulty, to persuade the hospital’s physicians that properly trained nurses could bring much needed order to the hospital and aid the physician by intelligently carrying out their orders. That very year another nurses training school opened at Massachusetts General Hospital in Boston.² Soon other hospitals in cities throughout the country followed suit, including Cook County Hospital in Chicago, Charity Hospital in New Orleans, and in the Queen City at the Cincinnati Hospital. The increase in the number of American training schools was truly phenomenal from fifteen in 1880 to thirty-five ten years later and 432 by the turn of the century.³

Student nurses proved to be a welcomed addition at the Cincinnati Hospital where earlier patients had been dependent for care on untrained nurses of often questionable character and dubious habits. Dr. C.G. Comegys, chief of the medical staff, enthusiastically reported at the end of the training school’s first year that the hospital had never been “so well kept” and was “clean in all respects.”⁴

Located at Twelfth and Plum streets in downtown Cincinnati, the municipal hospital consisted of eight pavilions connected by covered walkways which enclosed a large central courtyard where patients and visitors could enjoy sunshine and fresh air in a park like setting. Traditionally open “to all on accommodating terms,” the hospital was, practically speaking since its founding in 1869 a refuge for the sick and poor. By the end of the century, however, the hospital’s trustees sought to attract “strangers or other persons of means, overtaken by illness, and wishing to avail themselves of the best appointments for proper care, who can here find refuge without sacrificing any of their liberties.”⁵ Significantly the hospital advertised the services of trained nurses among the advantages of seeking care at the Cincinnati Hospital.⁶

Reflecting the need for trained nurses, the Cincinnati Training School grew rapidly from twenty pupil nurses in 1890 to fifty-two a year later, also an indication of the attraction which the field of nursing held for women.⁶ Over the course of two years, young women learned the “scientific skills” of nursing through practical work on the wards and lectures delivered by members of the medical staff. Nursing was scientific because its practitioners based their knowledge on the principles and facts of medical science. In this context, the training school, and medical staff stressed the nurse’s role as handmaiden to the physician.⁷

Miss Annie Murray presided over the day-to-day affairs of the hospital as chief matron and principal of the training school. A graduate of the Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh, Miss Murray, who came to Cincinnati from Philadelphia where she had served as assistant matron at Old Blockley, was described by those who knew her as a genteel lady of refined tastes and cultivated manners, attributes important to the acceptance and ultimate success of the school.

However, Miss Murray’s genteel ways belied an iron will and unbending ways. Exasperated, in 1893, the hospital trustees terminated their contract with the Society of the Cincinnati Training School and established a school under the hospital’s own management and direction.⁸

Under the leadership of a new superintendent, Olive Fischer, a graduate of Blockley Hospital, the new training school flourished. By 1894 there could be no doubt that the school was an integral part of the hospital. That year the trustees called on the city to provide a Nurses Home where the young women could enjoy “pleasant, home-like surroundings,” away from the hospital but in a building on hospital grounds. Earlier that winter, many nurses became ill, a situation attributed to the fact that, after working

The need for trained nurses was evidenced by the rapid growth of the Cincinnati Training School.
twelve hours in overcrowded wards, nurses were forced to rest in small, stuffy rooms adjacent to the patients. The move to provide a Nurses Home demonstrated the importance of the training school in the day-to-day functioning of the hospital.9

By 1900, the importance of nurses to the hospital routine was irrefutable. In response to an irate letter from the Cincinnati Taxpayers Association, which argued that the trustees of the Cincinnati Hospital had no legal authority to maintain a training school, the trustees replied that it was, in fact, their duty to employ nurses and, “to bring them to the highest degree of proficiency so that their work may be skilful, reliable and of the greatest benefit to patients.” The trustees concluded that the art of nursing played an important part in modern medicine and was best acquired by a “regular course in the theory and practice of nursing.”10

By the turn of the century, the training course at the Cincinnati Hospital lasted three years in order to provide practical instruction in every phase of the art of nursing. Only one deficiency, the lack of a “diet kitchen” marred the school’s otherwise high standards. Earlier, in 1894, the hospital’s trustees and medical staff recommended that the school provide a special diet kitchen with “instructions in cookery for the sick.”11 Nothing was done, however, and by 1903, the nurses themselves were complaining about the lack of such training. “Specially and scientifically prepared food was, the nurses argued, part of the medical treatment necessary for effecting the cure of... patients.” Once more the physicians and trustees supported the nurses and this time the city took prompt action.12

At the same time, hospital officials acted on another matter of concern, the steadily deteriorating condition of the municipal hospital, recommending in 1896 that the city build a new one. In the face of Cincinnati’s growing population, there was a real need for more beds. At its peak census of 407 that year, the hospital was strained beyond capacity, particularly in facilities for contagious diseases. Moreover, as the medical staff reminded city officials, scientific medicine had progressed dramatically making the now thirty year old hospital’s single laboratory and small operating rooms sadly outmoded.13

Despite significant support for a new hospital, an active campaign did not get underway until the turn of the century. After numerous setbacks, Cincinnati General Hospital finally opened in 1914. In the fall of that year, the Training School of the Cincinnati Hospital was reorganized as the Cincinnati General Hospital School of Nursing and Health under the direction of Laura Logan. A Canadian by birth, Miss Logan earned a B.A. from Acadia University in Nova Scotia and later, in 1901, graduated with a diploma in nursing from Mount Sinai Hospital in New York City. She also attended Columbia University and received an M.A. from Acadia University. Along with her academic credentials, Miss Logan had an excellent professional background with considerable administrative experience.

As superintendent of nurses, Miss Logan headed a staff of thirty-two graduate nurses and was responsible for the school of nursing as well. Like their superior, all of the staff nurses were involved in teaching student nurses. While head nurses supervised students on their wards providing informal instruction, the supervisors of medicine, surgery, and contagious diseases lectured on particular aspects of nursing. Together, Miss Logan, Blanche Blanckman, assistant superintendent of nursing; and Blanche Eldon, supervisor of...
the operating pavilion, taught anatomy and physiology, a course especially suited to the needs of the student nurses. Otherwise, the majority of the nursing lectures were delivered by members of the medical staff, many of whom were also professors in the Ohio Miami Medical College of the University of Cincinnati, who adapted their courses to the nurses' interests and concerns. Gratefully Miss Logan praised the doctors for their "willingness to assist in the instruction and exercise supervision" of the school of nursing.

In June 1916, the School of Nursing and Health became part of the College of Medicine under the direction of Dean Christian R. Holmes. The city and the university's board of trustees acted in order to make the "highest use of the facilities of the Hospital and of the University in the interest of the health and education of the community they serve." Together the nursing school and the college of medicine constituted an essential unit in society functioning to cure the sick and at the same time to educate physicians and nurses to serve society.

Both Laura Logan and Dean Holmes viewed the 800 bed hospital as a laboratory where nurses could receive "scientific instruction in the fundamental principles and practice of nursing." To Miss Logan's credit, she regarded nursing as more than experiential learning. Not that experience was unimportant; it was, in fact, the very basis of nursing education. But Miss Logan went beyond simple experience to postulate the existence of certain principles of nursing, like those involved, for instance, in the theory of sepsis, the proper way to move patients, and methods of food preparation. Supervisors and head nurses instructed students in the "art" of nursing, and members of the medical faculty offered "scientific instruction essential to the pursuance of the study and practice of nursing."

The thirty-three month graded curriculum began with anatomy, chemistry, and microbiology all applied to nursing and other subjects such as hospital and household economy, cookery and dietetics, and pharmacy, pharmacology, and therapeutics; all courses "fundamental to the work of nursing." In the hospital, probationers began their practical experience with "dusting, bed-making and simple bedside care," progressing the next year to caring for more seriously ill patients on the medical and surgical wards. Second year students also learned about the theory and methods of various medical treatments. In the third and final year, students gained experience in obstetrics, pediatrics, and other specialties and had time, if they wished, for electives in public health and ward administration in a private hospital. Second and third year students were required to work eight hours each day or a total of fifty-six hours each week in addition to their classroom lectures. For the most part, nursing remained dependent on medical science for its scientific content and physicians continued to lecture on a broad variety of diseases and conditions. Increasingly, however, Miss Logan and her nursing faculty emphasized newly defined maxims critical to the care of the patient, discrete principles of nursing which had little if anything to do with the practice of medicine.

In addition to the basic three year nursing curriculum, the School of Nursing and Health and the University of Cincinnati also offered a five year program whereby students could earn a bachelor of science degree as well as a diploma in nursing. To qualify, students attended the College of Arts and Sciences for two years before entering nurses' training. The course did not lead to a degree in nursing but rather to a baccalaureate degree plus a diploma in nursing. Whether or not to take the five year course was up to the individual student. The school of nursing prepared all of its students, whatever their preference, to function eventually as head nurses, supervisors, instructors, or public health nurses. Still, at a time when most patients, particularly middle and upper class people, preferred to remain at home, most graduate nurses sought and found employment as private duty nurses.

In 1917, the School of Nursing and Health, emphasizing its role in preventive medicine and its duty to educate nurses for the whole community, instituted a special eight month program in public health nursing for graduate nurses. A variety of courses: bacteriology and hygiene, sociology, and nutrition prepared matriculants for work among the city's tenement dwellers.

Besides serving the immediate community of Cincinnati, the school also offered its expertise to other
schools of nursing which, because of their size and location
in small towns, lacked specialties necessary to a well-rounded
nursing education. Recognizing its position as a leading
school of nursing in one of the nation’s best equipped and
better known hospitals, the School of Nursing and Health
sought to assist smaller training schools throughout a large
region. Miss Logan was well aware that a training school was
necessary to the proper staffing of many hospitals and to the
 provision of nurses for the community. Hospitals in Cincin-
nati: Bethesda, Christ, Deaconess, and Jewish were among
the first to take advantage of the arrangement seeking
instruction for their students in public health and contagious
diseases as well as pediatrics. Hospitals in smaller towns also
participated. In 1926, twenty-two hospital schools of nursing
affiliated with General Hospital’s School of Nursing and
Health for some aspect of their curriculum. Student nurses
from Findlay, Piqua, and Delaware, Ohio all took affiliations
in a variety of specialties, some staying for as long as six
months or a year. Hospitals from as far away as Georgia were
also attracted by the expertise offered in Cincinnati. Students
from Albany, Dalton, and Rome, Georgia began coming to
Cincinnati in 1926. Although the so-called “Georgia
connection” lasted only a few years, General Hospital continued
to offer its vast educational services to large numbers of
student nurses from hospitals closer to Cincinnati.20

Throughout the thirties, despite the Depression,
the School of Nursing and Health continued to grow offering
affiliations as well as courses for graduate nurses who wished
to broaden their skills, in addition to the five year degree and
basic diploma programs. Then in 1938, after nearly a quarter
of a century as part of the College of Medicine, the School of
Nursing and Health became an autonomous unit within the
University of Cincinnati. Significantly, the following year,
the school abolished its diploma course and instituted a
single curriculum leading to the degree, bachelor of science
in nursing. The new four year program focused on the
principles, techniques, and skills of nursing applied to the
care of patients and involved lectures by nursing professors
as well as laboratory experience. No longer dependent on
medical science, the nursing curriculum marshalled medical
facts to explicate and illustrate nursing principles. Courses
taken in the College of Liberal Arts and School of Household
Administration included foods and nutrition, abnormal psy-
chology, and child development as well as history, English,
and economics. The first part of the curriculum was designed
to give the student preparation basic to the field of nursing as
well as courses important to one’s cultural development.
Having studied the fundamental biological and social sci-
ences, students progressed in their third year to the clinical
area to study “the theory of nursing in relation to the various
branches of medicine and surgery.” Lectures and ward
assignments were arranged “to make possible satisfactory
correlation of theory and practice” of nursing.21

Throughout its history in Cincinnati, professional
nursing has been identified as a science. This is perhaps
best illustrated by events at the Training School of the Cin-
nati Hospital, the school which eventually became affiliated
with the University of Cincinnati as a collegiate program.
The meaning of the term, science, has changed over time
and so has the content and philosophy of nursing education.
In 1889, nursing was defined as a science
because its skills were exacting and dependent on proven
theories of medical science. By the mid-teens, Laura Logan
and other nursing leaders were engaged in identifying certain
principles underlying the practice of nursing. However, the
major content of nursing education still derived from medicine
and in this context the nurse remained the handmaiden of
the physician. When the School of Nursing and Health
became an autonomous unit of the university, it began
offering a single curriculum leading to the degree, bachelor of
science in nursing. At that time nursing was redefined as
an independent discipline, no longer based on the practice
of medicine. Rather facts of medical science were auxiliary to
and useful in explaining the principles and theories of nursing
practice. Ultimately the modern nurse assumed her role as
an independent member of the medical team.

Included in the curriculum
were courses dealing with
cookery, dietetics, and
nutrition.
Students gained practical experience working on the wards. Second and third year students were required to work fifty-six hours a week in addition to their classroom lectures.