

Public Health Nursing Pioneer: Jane Elizabeth Hitchcock 1863–1939

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Abstract Jane Elizabeth Hitchcock was one of many distinguished nursing leaders of the 19th and early 20th centuries who attended a women's college before enrolling in a nurse training school. Like many of her contemporaries with equally impeccable family credentials, Hitchcock was something of an enigma to her family for choosing nursing over teaching, the most common acceptable career for women of her social class. Hitchcock's endowment of character, according to contemporary Lavinia Dock, exemplified the best of her Puritan roots. Her contributions to the evolution of public health nursing and the integration of public health nursing content into curriculums of training schools rivaled the achievements in higher education of her famous father, grandfather, and brother but garnered no comparable recognition. Her life presents an interesting case for analysis of an independent woman, a characteristic shared by many pioneers in the early years of public health nursing: 1893 to 1920.

Key words: visiting nursing, Henry Street Settlement, New York Nurses' Settlement, New York Hospital Training School, Board of Nurse Examiners of New York State.

Several of the distinguished leaders in public health nursing in the late 19th and early 20th centuries attended women's colleges before enrolling in nurse training schools. Jane Elizabeth Hitchcock was one of these leaders. Although her name is not as recognizable as

those of Lillian Wald and Lavinia Dock, Hitchcock's contributions to public health nursing and, in particular, the integration of public health nursing theory and clinical experiences into the nurse training schools between 1895 and 1925, rivaled the achievements in higher education of her famous father, grandfather, and brother. After many years at Henry Street Settlement, she carved out an entrepreneurial role as an itinerant lecturer on public health nursing, underscoring her belief that this content should be included in the curriculums of all training schools. Like many other public health nurses of her day, Hitchcock was bright, creative, and independent-minded. Her life story is an interesting example of women's evolving professional and social roles in America.

WOMEN OF THE VICTORIAN ERA AND PUBLIC HEALTH NURSING

Women's roles at the end of the 19th century were inextricably linked to the birth of trained nurses and the development of institutions of higher education for women (Chapman, 1969). The model of community living for settlement house workers and public health nurses supported the development of independent roles for women. The new American woman in the 1890s often chose to remain single, was well educated and economically independent, advocated economic and social reform, and championed professional achievement for women (Buhler-Wilkerson, 1993; Melosh, 1982; Smith-Rosenberg, 1985; Vicinus, 1985). Wald and other founders of settlement houses and visiting nurse associations exemplified these characteristics (Melosh, 1982).

By 1890, more than 1,000 institutions of higher education existed in the United States; of those, more

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than three-fifths accepted women (Kleinberg, 1999). Numbers of hospital training schools for nurses also increased dramatically in the 1880s and 1890s. In 1898, there were 325 nurse training programs in the United States and Canada (Hodson, 1898). Training schools were graduating thousands of nurses each year, but these graduates were not assured of finding positions once they completed their training.

Dock and Stewart, in the first edition of *A Short History of Nursing* (1920), listed private duty as the oldest and largest of three branches of nursing, the other two being hospital service and visiting nursing. Training schools kept registries of their graduates available for private nursing (e.g., Report of the Trustees, 1891, 1892; 1893). There were very few staff nurse positions in hospitals. Students made up most of hospitals' nursing staffs, and graduate nurses were employed only as superintendents, assistant superintendents, head nurses, and supervisors (Dock & Stewart, 1920). Visiting nursing offered economic security and independence for graduate nurses unable to find employment in their training hospitals (Buhler-Wilkerson, 1989, 1993).

In 1893, Lillian Wald created the term "public health nurse" to describe nurses who cared for the sick poor in their own homes (Buhler-Wilkerson, 1993). The progressive reform, public health movements, and visiting nursing experience of the previous two decades inspired her paradigm for practice (Buhler-Wilkerson, 1993). Waves of immigrants between 1881 and 1920 provided the patients, and training schools provided the nurses. Graduating in 1891 with Lillian Wald and Mary Brewster from the New York Training School for Nurses, Hitchcock joined them in 1896 at New York Nurses' Settlement, later known as Henry Street Settlement. By choosing nursing, Hitchcock deviated from the path of all the other independent women in her family, who had graduated from college to become teachers.

THE DISTINGUISHED AMHERST HITCHCOCKS

Hitchcock's father, Edward, born in Amherst, Massachusetts, in 1828 to Amherst College President Edward Hitchcock and Ora (White) Hitchcock, was a graduate of Amherst College and of the Medical School of Harvard University (Tyler, 1895). Her mother, Mary Lewis Judson Hitchcock, was the daughter of David Judson of Connecticut. Jane Elizabeth Hitchcock was born in North Amherst, Massachusetts, on August 1, 1863 (Alumnae questionnaire, 1923). She was the fifth of 10 children, one of four daughters and the only one to become a nurse.

After graduating from Amherst High School, Hitchcock attended Mount Holyoke Seminary (now Mount Holyoke College) from 1882 to 1884. Her aunts Jane

Elizabeth, Catharine, and Emily Hitchcock attended Mount Holyoke Seminary in the 1850s (One hundred year biographical directory, 1937). Hitchcock's oldest sister, Caroline Judson Hitchcock, graduated from Mount Holyoke Seminary and spent her career as a chemistry and biology teacher (Alumnae Association, 1915). Hitchcock did not graduate from Mount Holyoke and spent two years at home before enrolling in Cornell University, Ithaca, New York, engaging in special studies from 1886 to 1888.

Hitchcock's brother, Edward, Jr., was a faculty member at Cornell, having been appointed to the position of acting professor of physical culture in 1884 (National cyclopaedia, 1897; Seelye, 1876; Who was who in America, 1963). Of Hitchcock's two years at Cornell, little is known. The archives of Cornell University contain brief records indicating that she enrolled in 1886 as a special student taking courses in American history, English literature, French, Italian, physiology, and vertebrate zoology (Alumni folder, 1888; Catalog of Students, 1886–1887). These courses are detailed in the Courses of Instruction 1886–1887 (1886) and Courses of Instruction 1887–1888 (1887). In 1886, special students had to be at least 21 years of age, have "satisfactory attainments," and "be admitted by vote of the Faculty, without examination." (Cornell University Bulletin, 1886).

In the collection of family letters in the Amherst College Archives, none are from or to Hitchcock. There is a photograph identifying her with a college mate from Cornell, Sarah Rogers, taken at the Hitchcock family home on College Street, Amherst (File on pictures of the Hitchcock family). There is no other information on the photograph and none in the Hitchcock family files in the archives. Letters from Edward, Jr., to his father, dated during the time his sister was at Cornell, do not mention Hitchcock, but do mention other family members (File on personal letters of the Hitchcock family). Although there are some omissions in information about Hitchcock's family, adequate verifiable information exists to confirm the connections to health care, post secondary education, public health, and teaching.

Articles in the popular press of the 1880s and 1890s (Lusk, 2002), such as one entitled "A New Profession for Women" in *Century Magazine* (North, 1883), presented nursing as a socially acceptable career for women. Perhaps, like her Henry Street Settlement colleague, Lavinia Dock, these articles influenced Hitchcock (Mottus, 1981). There were few career choices open to women in the latter part of the 19th century. The most common women's career, aside from becoming a wife and mother, was teaching. Women's seminaries and colleges, founded in the 19th century, "educated women to assume their rightful roles of wife,

mother, and teacher and promised the nation better prepared moral guardians of family life” (Lewenson, 1993). Formal training for nursing prepared women to be self-supporting and participate in social action outside the home (Lewenson, 1993; Stewart, 1948).

Hitchcock’s family background and her brother’s position at Cornell University may have influenced her to choose one of the early, prestigious training schools, because collegiate programs in nursing were more than a decade away. New York Hospital Training School did seek well-educated women as students. Nearly one quarter (23%) of New York Training School’s graduates had attended college before enrolling in the training program (Mottus, 1981). Hitchcock was also typical of her classmates, daughters of professional men and sisters of professional women, from middle or upper class families (Mottus, 1981).

On May 15, 1888, Hitchcock applied to the New York Hospital Training School for Nurses, stating in her application that she had “never been employed” and giving Reverend Julius H. Seelye of Amherst, Massachusetts, as a reference (Application blank, 1888). However, she withdrew her application before the summer. On June 3, 1889, she wrote a letter requesting reapplication, followed by a letter on June 9, 1889, stating “I have not had any connection with any training school for nurses.” Her brother, Edward Hitchcock, Jr., wrote a letter of reference on her health, stating that she was “perfectly well able to successfully do nursing” (Letters, 1889). Hitchcock enrolled in the fall class of that year (Sutcliffe, 1891), graduating on March 31, 1891 (Alumnae questionnaire, 1923). There were 20 in her class (Mottus, 1981).

Hitchcock began her career in nursing at the New York Hospital Training School. Her devotion to public health nursing would come later, however, as there is no record of a visiting nursing experience during her two years of training (Sutcliffe, 1891). Visiting nursing experiences were not part of the curriculum for most nurses’ training schools in 1889–1891 (Hodson, 1898).

Returning to Massachusetts after graduation in 1891, Hitchcock stayed in Amherst for some rest at home and then accepted her first nursing position as the head nurse at the Newton-Cottage Hospital in Newton Lower Falls, Massachusetts (now Newton-Wellesley Hospital) from 1891 to 1893 (Alumnae Association, 1886). Mrs. T. B. Hitchcock, wife of a local dentist, was on the ladies board of the hospital (Report of the Trustees, 1891). Because all the Hitchcocks of the 19th century descended from the brothers Luke and Matthias Hitchcock, who emigrated to Connecticut in the 1600s (Hitchcock, 1894), it is possible that the family connection led to Hitchcock’s position. In the annual reports of the hospital for 1891–1893, the

matron reported having one head nurse (Report of the Trustees, 1891, 1892, 1893).

From 1893 to 1896, there is no record of Hitchcock’s activities other than her presence at her family home in Amherst, Massachusetts. Possibly she was in contact with New York Training School classmates Lillian Wald and Mary Brewster, joining them in New York City in 1896. Wald and many of her nurses were graduates of New York Hospital Training School or Bellevue (Mottus, 1981). No evidence of any correspondence has survived in the Archives of Henry Street Settlement at the New York City Library or the records of the Hitchcock family in the Amherst College Archives.

THE NEW YORK NURSES’ SETTLEMENT

As was traditional with settlement house workers, Hitchcock moved into 265 Henry Street when she joined the nursing staff in 1896. She noted that the staff had increased to five with her arrival (Hitchcock, 1935). Lavinia Dock, a Bellevue graduate, also joined the staff in 1896 (Estabrooks, 1995). Over her years at Henry Street, Hitchcock was a public health staff nurse, head nurse, and then superintendent, as the nurse’s settlement grew more extensive in its work and in the number of nurses on the staff. For most of her career, Hitchcock lived the life of the public health nurse she described so eloquently in her many articles (e.g., Hitchcock, 1902, 1905b, 1907, 1935). Hitchcock’s family had not only given her a connection with health care and public health, but also considerable writing ability, through which she penned her observations and experiences throughout the remainder of her life.

While serving as a supervising nurse at the New York Nurses’ Settlement, Hitchcock wrote about visiting nursing in the settlement, shortly after its incorporation under the name Henry Street Settlement in 1907 (Hitchcock, 1907). At the time of Hitchcock’s article, the settlement had four programs: civic work consisting of campaigns for better schools, improved housing, clean streets, and more parks; social work with clubs, classes, kindergartens, and gymnasiums; work in the country sponsoring summer camps and fresh air parties, vacation houses, and convalescent homes; and the visiting nursing work. Thirty trained nurses were employed at the settlement, 23 of whom were directly engaged in visiting nursing; the other two were Hitchcock, the supervising nurse, and an assistant supervisor along with five in executive positions.

Nurses new at this work of public health nursing lived at the Henry Street house and worked in its surrounding districts. Once well oriented to the work, a nurse might remain at Henry Street or be given a post at one of the

other stations. Hitchcock described the care with which such assignments were made:

Her months of work in the parent house must have proved her to be absolutely reliable both in sincerity and in judgment. Each nurse's personal taste is considered, and the one who finds herself most in sympathy with the Irish people is sent to an Irish district, the Italian sympathizer to an Italian district, the Jewish to a Jewish, the Bohemian to a Bohemian, etc. (1907)

The settlement served as a training school for public health nursing, offering opportunities for those undertaking this work in New York City and elsewhere (Hitchcock, 1907). Hitchcock expressed her enthusiasm for this preparation of public health nurses: "The Settlement feels that its mission is not merely to maintain a perfect staff of assistants, but that it also has a rare opportunity to help others to an understanding of the problem of the poor man, irrespective of where her final field of work [a nurse trained at the settlement for public health nursing] may lie (Hitchcock, 1907)."

At the National Conference of Charities and Corrections held in 1904, in Portland, Oregon, Hitchcock gave a report on the status of visiting nursing, apparently from a subcommittee of the conference. She described typical cases seen by visiting nurses and two possible models for reimbursement for services: a central association and a plan through a benefit association such as an insurance company (Hitchcock, 1905a). Lillian Wald was laying the groundwork, in a proposal, for a plan for insurance companies to fund nursing services for their policyholders. In 1909, Henry Street Settlement inaugurated the program of the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company covering home visits by nurses. This program was to continue until 1953 (Buhler-Wilkerson, 1993; Hamilton, 1987). Public health nurses pioneered the concept of direct insurance reimbursement for nurses, which advanced practice nurses would finally achieve in the latter decades of the 20th century (Jennings, 1977).

FORMAL PREPARATION FOR PUBLIC HEALTH NURSING

With few exceptions, public health nursing was not part of the curriculums of training schools for nursing in the late 19th or early 20th century. Two superintendents of training schools in Massachusetts were notable exceptions, providing a public health nursing experience in the curriculums. District nursing was part of the curriculum at the Waltham Hospital Training School for Nurses from its beginnings in 1885 (Fiske, 1949). In 1906, Mary Riddle, Superintendent of Nurses and of the Training School at the Newton-Cottage Hospital, where Hitchcock

had once been the head nurse, initiated an affiliation with the Newton District Nursing Association (Kaufman, Hawkins, Higgins, & Friedman, 1988).

Hitchcock was a strong advocate for the inclusion of public health nursing as an integral part of training school experiences and began her campaign to this end early in the 20th century (Hitchcock, 1912a,b). In her report for the Visiting Nursing Subcommittee at the National Conference of Charities and Corrections in 1904, she praised those schools hiring lecturers on social problems as part of preparation for visiting nursing (Hitchcock, 1905a). Before public health nursing courses were formalized and training schools added public health nursing to their curriculums, several public health nursing agencies created opportunities for nurses to acquire this knowledge. Henry Street Settlement and other visiting nurse services offered training in public health nursing to their new staff nurses, as well as to nurses weary of another practice area and ready to try something new to see if they fit into settlement work (Hitchcock, 1907). In the first issue of the *American Journal of Nursing*, October 1900, Lillian Wald reported that the New York Nurses' Settlement proposed to offer a two-month experience in public health nursing. This offer was extended to third year students enrolled in training schools with three-year courses (Wald, 1900).

In 1912, Henry Street Settlement began to offer a three-month postgraduate practicum in visiting nursing for graduate nurses. The curriculum included weekly instruction and daily work in the districts, as well as tours of public institutions, Ellis Island, the Department of Health of the City of New York, public schools, and offices of the Charity Organization Society. Hitchcock, then Director of Nursing Service of the settlement, supervised this course (Brainard, 1922). By 1919, Brainard, chronicler of the history of public health nursing, noted that 13 institutions had courses of several months' duration.

In addition to supervising the Henry Street course, in 1915, Hitchcock had begun lecturing on public health nursing to senior nursing students in some of New York City's training schools. World War I sparked a change in thinking about public health nursing in training school curriculums. In the aftermath of the war, Brainard (1922) reported, as the demand for public health nurses grew, the need for training in public health nursing became urgent. In 1920, the Red Cross Public Health Nursing Service "made a large appropriation toward the preparation of public health nurses at the Henry Street Settlement, New York City" (Dock et al., 1922). Public health nursing agencies continued their leadership in preparing nurses for public health work. Training schools continued to lag in this effort, however, as did the National League of Nursing Education's (NLNE) curriculum recommendations.

In the 1932 edition of the NLNE's *A Curriculum for Schools of Nursing*, there was brief mention of courses offered by "progressive visiting nursing associations," but public health nursing content and experiences were not included in the recommendations. By 1937, the NLNE finally included an experience in public health nursing in its recommended curriculum guide (National League of Nursing Education, 1937).

Hitchcock responded to a request for her services following World War I, in part to aid the effort to recruit more nurses into public health nursing work. Early in 1919, she could be found interviewing nurses returning to the United States after service in the Army Nurse Corps or the American Red Cross, the Division of Public Health Nursing of the Bureau of Information for Nurses, American Red Cross Nursing Service paid to assist nurses to reenter civilian life. The Division also helped public health agencies to locate nursing staff. Between February 10 and September 15, 1919, 366 different public health organizations had applied for assistance in securing public health nurses (Dock et al., 1922). Perhaps it was this experience that incited Hitchcock's interest in devoting herself full-time to lecturing in training schools on public health nursing. Writing in 1921 in the *American Journal of Nursing*, Hitchcock reaffirmed her long-held belief in the mandatory inclusion of public health nursing content and experience in nurses' training, "Has not the day arrived when the subject [public health nursing] should appear in the required curriculum? (Hitchcock, 1921)" She had just made the commitment to being a full-time itinerant lecturer for training schools, but she did not sever her ties with Henry Street or cease to live there until 1922, when she moved to Brooklyn.

Thereafter, until retirement in 1930, Hitchcock devoted herself full-time to lecturing on public health nursing to students in training schools in the greater New York City area and throughout the state. To prepare her lectures, Hitchcock created a detailed prospectus of six lectures on public health and sent a copy to the *American Journal of Nursing*, describing them as a "series designed to give senior nurses an intelligent idea of Public Health Nursing, whether or not they may later choose it for themselves (Department of Public Health Nursing, 1922)." Of this work lecturing on public health nursing, she wrote, "I do not know what the nurses think of it, but I do know that I am enjoying it hugely (Department of Public Health Nursing, 1922)." This new venture was the culmination of an entire career devoted to the development of public health nursing and to improvement of the basic educational preparation of nurses for public health work (Dock, 1923). An announcement of Hitchcock's lectures survives in the Archives of the New York Public Library dated 1922–23 season and reads in part:

Miss Hitchcock will continue her talks with senior classes in nursing on the subject of Public Health Nursing. Engagements, within commuting distance of New York City, will be made in weekly appointments for six consecutive weeks. The cost will be at the rate of 10 dollars per talk for the series of six appointments. Outside of Greater New York traveling expenses and entertainment must be added to this sum. A circuit is being arranged for the middle and western parts of New York State in which traveling expenses will be divided equally between the schools subscribing. Address Jane Elizabeth Hitchcock, R.N. 265 Henry Street, New York City (Miss Jane Hitchcock reference, 1922).

Hitchcock was also interested in lecturing to the public on health. A collection of letters dated March 1923 exists in the Nutting collection of Teacher's College, Columbia University Archives. This correspondence, between M. Adelaide Nutting and Hitchcock, details Hitchcock's desire for consultation with Professor Nutting about a leaflet describing her proposed lectures on health building for Women's Clubs. Additional letters to and from Professor Nutting in 1924 and 1925, describe suggestions for the leaflet and for a meeting between the two women (Letters, 1923–25).

The entrepreneurial spirit Hitchcock exhibited blossomed at a time when women were ridding themselves of the shackles of the Victorian age and seeking careers. Of the estimated 13.9 million single, widowed, divorced, and status unknown women over the age of 14, 46.4% were gainfully employed outside their own homes in 1920 (Wandersee, 1981). Gone were the garments of the Victorians, glamorized by the Gibson girls. Hemlines rose, time-consuming coiffures were sheared, and women adopted styles more suited to their everyday lives (Perrett, 1982). Assembly line manufacturing made the automobile accessible to the average household, no longer a plaything for the rich alone. Waters reported in 1920 that there were more than 9,000 public health nurses registered in more than 3,000 organizations. Public health nursing had reached all the states, and these nurses began to use automobiles, as well as horses and other conveyances, to reach their patients in rural areas and small-town America. With the numbers of public health nurses growing rapidly, membership in the national organization flourished (Waters, 1920).

Hitchcock's commitment to the advancement of public health nursing was reflected in her membership in the National Organization for Public Health Nursing, from its inception in 1912 (Fitzpatrick, 1975). She was a regular contributor to professional journals on the topics of public health nursing experiences and public health nursing content in curriculums. Her devotion was also

reflected in 16 years of service to the profession on the Board of Nurse Examiners of the state of New York.

REGULATION OF THE PROFESSION: THE BOARD OF NURSE EXAMINERS OF NEW YORK STATE

New York was one of the first states to pass a registration law for nurses and create a board of nurse examiners responsible for examination and licensure of nurses and registration of schools.

Joining Virginia, North Carolina, and New Jersey, in 1903, the legislature of New York passed the Armstrong Nurses' Registration Bill, which had been introduced in February of that year (Nurses' bill is signed, 1903). Hitchcock was named to serve on the original Board of Nurse Examiners of New York State and was its secretary until 1919. Hitchcock's first report of Board activities was published in the *American Journal of Nursing* in December 1904. She recorded the activities of the board in registration of training schools, including the required instruction and mandatory two-year course. Hitchcock described in detail the work of the Board in registering schools and the list of schools registered as of October 1904. Six of these were the training schools of hospitals in her home state of Massachusetts: Boston City Hospital, Lynn Hospital, Massachusetts General, New England Hospital for Women and Children, St. Luke's in New Bedford, and Tewksbury State (Hitchcock, 1904).

During her service on the Board of Nurse Examiners in New York State, Hitchcock was able to monitor the amount of public health information on the State Board Examination and the preparation of training school graduates for visiting nurse work (Hitchcock, 1921). In addition to the office of secretary, Hitchcock assumed responsibility for questions on the examinations testing public health nursing knowledge. Her reports of the Board activities continued to be published in the *American Journal of Nursing*, including those following the convention of the American Nurses' Association, which, in the early years of state licensure, had a section on Boards of Examiners (e.g., Hitchcock, 1909; Hitchcock, 1914; Hitchcock, 1916).

In 1913, Hitchcock was, in her own words, "entrusted with the Civil Service examination for the position of Municipal Nurse in New York City. From the successful list, appointments were made for nurses employed by the Department of Health (Hitchcock, 1921)." The lack of knowledge of public health nursing demonstrated by nurses presenting themselves for the test added to Hitchcock's belief that all nurses should have public health nursing as part of the required training school program. In a 1917 *American Journal of Nursing* article,

she outlined her thinking about this examination, its content, and the knowledge demonstrated by nurses. She concluded that all public health nurses should have to pass an examination, so that the leaders of agencies employing them might be saved the energy invested in those unsuited for the work (Hitchcock, 1917).

WRITING AND THE OUT OF DOORS

Hitchcock published many articles in the *American Journal of Nursing*, *Visiting Nursing Quarterly*, *Public Health Nurse*, and *Public Health Nursing*. In 1902, she wrote about 500 individuals with pneumonia cared for by Henry Street nurses during 1901, describing the role of the visiting nurse through a case study approach. Her research skills were reflected in this article, as she enumerated the outcomes of the cases, detailing complications, and the number of patients cared for without hospitalization. "It is surprising how well the majority of patients do with this simple, homely care (Hitchcock, 1902)." The article included an interesting table of three of the cases and the babies' vital signs and outcomes (Hitchcock, 1902). Her ability to paint a picture of the public health nurse at work came through as well: "The nurse in whose district it belongs makes such a case her first visit, and as she draws near the house, which is one of a solid block of tenements five stories above the basement, she adjusts her bag and her back for a long climb (Hitchcock, 1902)."

Travel and the out of doors permeated Hitchcock's work, as well as her recreational time. At the conclusion of the 1904 meeting of the National Conference of Charities in Portland, Oregon, at which she had spoken, she proceeded to San Francisco to the annual meeting of the California State Nurses' Association. When the conference ended, she was clearly not ready to return to New York City. "As we began to contemplate the timetables of the Southern Pacific and of the Rio Grande Railroad we realized that it meant going East, and at the end of the road lay New York and work (Hitchcock, 1905b)." So Hitchcock and her companion, Miss Rogers (probably Lina Rogers also of the Henry Street Settlement), spent three weeks enjoying the West, traveling by "queer uncomfortable stages across a hundred and twenty-five miles of Nevada sagebrush back and up to Lundy, Cal[ifornia]," and from there, riding horses and camping in the Sierras on to the Yosemite Valley (Hitchcock, 1905b). The story of the trip and photographs appeared in the November 1905 issue of the *American Journal of Nursing* (Hitchcock, 1905b).

Divided skirts and gaiters had been a forethought in San Francisco. When we had learned to spring unaided from the ground into the saddle and to ride off over the

trails we felt that life had really begun for us.... Our objective point was, of course, the Yosemite Valley.... There, indeed, did we find the rest for which we had longed. We forgot that people could be ill, forgot that the cities thronged with weary mortals needing rest and finding none, forgot even ourselves and knew only that the world is wondrous and fair (Hitchcock, 1905b).

Feeling the call to travel once more to “share the lives of its [Appalachian mountain district] public health nurses even if only for a short time,” Hitchcock visited Running Creek in the fall of 1923 and then wrote about her visit for the April 1924 issue of *The Public Health Nurse* (Hitchcock, 1924). A Mrs. Mann had entered into the work of school nurse, and her colleague Miss Wells became the teacher when the two young women moved to Running Creek [no state identified] and purchased a small farm several years before Hitchcock’s visit. In addition to her nurse’s training, Mrs. Mann had prepared for her role as a farmer through a short agricultural course at Columbia University. They then took in four children who were wards of the Children’s Aid Society. The story exemplified the role of the public health nurse in a rural setting at that time (Hitchcock, 1924).

The nurse who sweeps a whole county or state with her health broom is an awe-inspiring sight, but back of her, a rock foundation for other health movements, is the community nurse. The imagination turns to her in her hand-to-hand struggle with social traditions, family life and inherited customs (Hitchcock, 1924).

Recalling the early days at Henry Street, Hitchcock wrote of the development of the visiting nurse’s bag. Hitchcock began her story by sketching the first day of the visiting nurse work of her two training school classmates and colleagues, Lillian Wald and Mary Brewster:

When on the epoch-making morning Miss Wald and Miss Brewster walked amongst the tenement houses of New York City looking for sick to whom they might minister, I fancy that their equipment was very simple – a gingham dress, a sailor hat, and a small bag similar to those still carried by women marketing in New York today. (Hitchcock, 1935)

As the complexity of care and the benefits of asepsis and antisepsis were recognized, larger bags were needed.

We provided ourselves with a small-sized Boston bag, and found a firm in the city which made them for us, adjusting them to suit our needs. It could hardly be called the design of any particular person, but rather the gathering together of ideas as presented by the nurses, ideas that sprang into practice as the occasion arose. (Hitchcock, 1935)

Hitchcock wove into her story inventories and descriptions of the bags of 1900 and of 1935. She then described how demand for the bags grew. “Visiting nurses in other localities asked the privilege of purchasing our bags (Hitchcock, 1935).” Soon, visiting nurses in the United States and in distant lands were carrying Henry Street Settlement bags. For several years, the settlement engaged in this work through the services of two volunteers, Mary M. Brown, a Presbyterian Hospital graduate, and a friend of hers, until at last the work was judged to be consuming too much time of these valuable women, and it was turned over to a commercial bag manufacturer (Hitchcock, 1935).

AMHERST’S GIFT TO PUBLIC HEALTH NURSING

Hitchcock, daughter of an important New England family and descendent of some of the founding mothers and fathers of the European settlements in New England, was a gift to public health nursing during its halcyon years and its decline (Buhler-Wilkerson, 1989). These are more than sufficient reasons to consider Hitchcock a pioneer in public health nursing. The very characteristics that enabled her to pursue nursing made this strong and determined woman successful in her career. In the obituary published in the *Alumnae News* of the New York Training School for Nurses, she was lauded as “a pioneer in Public Health Nursing [who] established high standards of unselfish devotion (Jane Elizabeth Hitchcock, 1939).”

Yankee ingenuity and a strong work ethic enabled Hitchcock to establish her own business as an itinerant lecturer in public health nursing for students in training schools and on health topics for lay audiences. Public health nursing probably matched her spirit more closely than any other nursing work, for public health nurses have always been among the most independent spirits of the profession. As Buhler-Wilkerson wrote, “American nurses saw health visiting [public health nursing] as an opportunity for professional independence, status, and economic security, enabling the health visitor to provide what Susan Reverby called ‘care with autonomy’ (1993; Reverby, 1987).”

Some years before Hitchcock’s death, Lavinia Dock wrote of her colleague from Henry Street Settlement:

Miss Hitchcock’s endowment of character was all that is best in Puritan tradition. Her “New England conscience” was united with an unflinching and mellow tolerance and charity of spirit. Her high sense of duty, her deep and delicate sympathy for the individual, whether patient or nurse, and her unflinching care in the details of teaching the ethical aspects of approach to the personalities of the sick, the foreigner and the

stranger, gave a special value to her long service in visiting nursing, and the influence she wielded so unobtrusively upon the younger nurses coming under her direction (1923).

Hitchcock's long connection to Henry Street Settlement continued, even after she was no longer a resident or staff member. On January 12, 1923, a formal opening was held for the Central Administration Building for the Henry Street Visiting Nurse Service, located on Park Avenue in New York City, and given by Mrs. Jacob H. Schiff in memory of her husband. "It was an evening for the friends of Henry Street (Wood, 1923)." Hitchcock was present and pictured among the "notable women who have contributed to the success of Henry Street." She was seated in the photograph among Annie W. Goodrich, Georgiana B. Judson, M. Adelaide Nutting, Henrietta Van Cleft, Rebecca Shatz, Mary Magon Brown, Lavinia L. Dock, Elizabeth A. Frank, and Lillian D. Wald (Wood, 1923).

RETIREMENT

Returning to Amherst around 1930, Hitchcock devoted her time to correspondence and to converting a New England barn into a home, dubbed "Was-a-barn" in typical New England humor. Responding to an alumnae questionnaire from Mount Holyoke in 1923, Hitchcock had listed as a special hobby "outdoor life" (Alumnae questionnaire, 1923). This, too, was part of her Hitchcock heritage, for her grandfather was instrumental in establishing a geological survey of Massachusetts in 1830, "the first of its kind in America to be carried to completion (Malone, 1932)." Her father's devotion to physical culture and his professorship in that field probably had their influence as well (Malone, 1932). Hitchcock's retirement years were devoted to the outdoors surrounding her rural home. She wrote at least one article during her retirement, having been prevailed upon to tell the story of the Henry Street Settlement bag for Public Health Nursing. Hitchcock was listed as Jane Elizabeth Hitchcock of Meriden, Connecticut, in the author's credit for this article, so perhaps she was staying with her sister Caroline Judson Hitchcock, a teacher in Meriden (Hitchcock, 1935). The visit apparently was not a permanent move, for Hitchcock continued to live in Amherst almost until her death (Spear, Charles, Haskins, & Smith, 1937).

Ironically, it was pneumonia, the disease Hitchcock had fought so hard to conquer during her years as a public health nurse, that ended her life on April 8, 1939, in Northampton at the age of 75 (Obituary, 1939). She was survived by two sisters, Caroline Judson and Lucy Clark of Amherst, and one brother, Albert W. of Holland, Massachusetts (Leonard, 1914).

Hitchcock was buried in the family plot in Wildwood Cemetery in Amherst. The stone marking her grave reads: "Jane Elizabeth daughter of Edward & Mary Hitchcock 1863–1939 (Personal visit to Amherst, Massachusetts, 1995)." This simple epitaph was typical of those in that cemetery and on gravestones dated from the same time in the famous Forrest Hills Cemetery in Boston (Wilson, 1998).

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