



2019.04

Mercy Hospital, Portland, Maine Collection

Repository:

Mercy Heritage Center
720 Heritage Center Place
Belmont, NC 28012

Preferred Citation:

Mercy Heritage Center, Belmont, North Carolina. Sisters of Mercy of the Americas.

Creator:

Mercy Hospital, Portland, Maine

Physical Description:

55 linear feet, including

- Documents
- Photographs
- Videos
- Slides
- Scrapbooks
- Objects

Dates:

1918-2019

Access:

The Mercy Hospital Archival Collection is open for research, except for student records and transcripts. All student records are subject to Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) restrictions of seventy-five years from the date of creation of the record. Contact Mercy Heritage Center staff for transcript requests.

Because of the nature of certain archival formats, including digital and audio-visual materials, access will require additional advanced notice

A box and folder list is available upon request.

Custodial History:



Mercy Hospital, Portland's historical records were initially housed at the hospital itself. The material was transferred to Maine Historical Society in Portland, Maine, where the collection was arranged and described. In September, 2019, the collection was transferred to Mercy Heritage Center in Belmont, North Carolina. The content of this finding aid was created by Henry M. Caiazzo, Maine Historical Society.

Administrative History:

In the autumn of 1918, the greatest health crisis in the city's history struck Portland. The Spanish Influenza pandemic of 1918-1919 claimed millions of lives worldwide. The ensuing health emergency quickly overwhelmed the city's limited hospital capacity. Right Reverend Bishop Louis Sebastian Walsh asked the Sisters of Mercy for volunteers to visit the homes of the sick. The entire order of 60 women volunteered.

The demand for a hospital was so great that Bishop Walsh established a new one. Following in the footsteps of Mother McAuley, Miss Marion Weeks, the daughter of a distinguished Portland surgeon, donated a portion of her property on the intersection of Congress and State Street (681 Congress) for the venture. On December 12, 1918, the new Queen's Hospital (named in honor of Mary, Mother of God) opened its doors, initially equipped to care for 25 patients.

In March 1920, Queen's Hospital was officially incorporated. Rising numbers of patients led Bishop Walsh to arrange the purchase of a large building on the corner of State and Deering streets from Richard Payson. It soon opened as a maternity department of the hospital, supervised by Josephine McLaughlin, R.N., of Portland. The Catholic Diocese also acquired all the buildings behind the Weeks house, between Congress and Deering Streets.

Administration transferred from the old Weeks House to the larger Payson house on Deering and State Streets in 1927, with Weeks transforming into a home for nurses. The neighboring buildings were connected by runways. Hospital administrators designated them as pavilions, named after the four Evangelists: Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.

Soon after Queen's Hospital (the future Mercy) opened, it responded to a growing demand for nurses. Along with the rest of the medical field, nursing underwent rapid transformation and professionalization at the turn of the twentieth century. Before 1900, nursing was primarily devoted to home care.

In 1920, Queen's Hospital opened the Queen's Hospital Training School, with Sister M. Constance McCarron as the first superintendent. The program took three years to complete for an R.N. degree. The program began on a small scale. The class of 1924 graduated five women, although the very first graduate from the program—Loretta Kilfoil (Colton) received her



diploma in 1923. In 1927, the number of students climbed to 15, and the school held its first public graduation ceremony in 1930, where eight graduates received diplomas.

The nursing school became a hub of activity. The first administrator of the hospital, Sister Mary Annunciata Quigley, R.N., (serving 37 years from 1930 – 1967) laid the early foundation for Mercy's policy of fostering training for its students across New England. Mercy Hospital's School of Nursing remained an important part of the institution's contribution to the community from its opening in 1920 until the last class graduated in 1987.

Sister Mary Consuela White was another major figure in Mercy history. A native of New Brunswick, she enrolled in Madigan Memorial School of Nursing in Houlton in 1937 before taking vows with the Sisters of Mercy in 1944. As a Sister, Mary Consuela studied at St. Joseph's College, Catholic University and earned both a B.S. and M.S. in nursing at Boston College. Sister Mary Consuela was Director of Nursing at Mercy from 1952 until 1974, and named Acting Director of the hospital in 1972 for a short time. After 22 years with the dual responsibility for both hospital nursing service and nursing education, she assumed chairmanship at Saint Joseph's College to establish their nursing department.

Scope and Content:

The collection is organized in 5 series: 1. Mercy Hospital School of Nursing (MHSON). 2. Mercy Hospital, General, ca. 1919-. 3. Sr. Mary Consuela White. 4. Photographs, AV. 5. Scrapbook, Oversize, Objects and Miscellany.

Series 1 represents the majority of the collection and relates to the Mercy Hospital School of Nursing (MHSON). The school operated, and was an integral part of the institution, from 1920-1987. Upon the closure of the school, an archival committee was set up to preserve the memory and rich history of MHSON, resulting in a basic archival processing of the school's collection in 1987. MHSON materials were kept primarily in original order, with a comprehensive rehousing into acid-free folders and boxes.

Series 2 (Mercy Hospital, General, ca. 1919-) is primarily comprised of materials from the Public Relations (P.R.) office, as well as general Mercy Hospital files, which contain mostly materials relating to day to day operation of the facility, administration, expansion, and other general hospital records.

Series 3 is formed from the records of Sister Mary Consuela White, ostensibly from her office at Mercy Hospital, as the composition of the records would seem to indicate. These records include budgetary materials, several written histories of the hospital, fundraising

efforts, as well as many materials from various administrative meetings.

Series 4 (Photography, A/V,) contains audio-visual materials from the Mercy Hospital collection, and encompasses the previous three series. The choice was made to keep these A/V materials together for ease of use from a reference perspective, as well as how the materials were stored before archival processing.

Series 4 contains a great deal of photography relating to MHSN and its activities, the Sisters of Mercy, and hospital operations in general. As a highlight, it also includes MHSN class photographs for nearly every year of operation. These materials have been digitized and can be found at <http://mercyhospital.mainmemory.net>

Series 5 (Scrapbooks, Objects, Oversize, and Miscellany) contains approximately thirty scrapbooks, ranging in size from 8"x10" to 20" x 25". These scrapbooks offer a very insightful look into the history of the medical community from 1920-1980, as well as how the hospital operated and expanded. As is the case with most scrapbooks, formed with newspaper, glue, and tape, many of the scrapbooks are extremely acidic and fragile.

Series 5 also contains several boxes of medical objects, teaching materials, and a nurses uniform, as well as oversize from other series. Objects have been removed from the archival collection to be cataloged as part of Mercy Heritage Center's artifact collection.

Processing Note

Boxes P5 and P7 are being retained at Mercy Hospital and neither are reflected on the finding aid. Both P5 and P7 are digital photographs on CDs that cover the latter half of the 20th and early 21st centuries. MHS recommended items be migrated to a server or other digital storage methodology before being sent to NC.

Series/Subseries:

Series 1: Mercy Hospital School of Nursing

1.1 Organization, General

1.2 Mercy Hospital School of Nursing, General and Miscellaneous

Series 2: Mercy Hospital, General

2.1 Mercy Hospital History

2.2 Administration



2.3 Buildings, Grounds and Expansion

2.4 Eastern Mercy Health System

2.5 Specialized Units/Departments

2.6 Public Relations Office, 1940-Present

2.7 Mercy Hospital Miscellany

Series 3: Sister Mary Consuela White Papers

3.1 Administration

Series 4: Photographs and Audio-Visual

4.1 Small Photographs

4.1.1 MHSON

4.1.2 Interior, Exterior, Grounds

4.1.3 Mercy General and Staff Photos

4.1.4 Auxiliary

4.2 Large Photographs

4.2.1 MHSON

4.2.2 Mercy General and Staff Photos

4.2.3 Interior, Exterior and Contact Sheets

4.3 Slides

4.4 VHS

Series 5: Scrapbooks, Oversize and Miscellany

5.1 Scrapbooks

5.2 Museum Objects and Uniforms

5.3 Books/Publications

5.5 Miscellany