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We'll get started at 2PM ET

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# **Online Office Hours**

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- **Where you're joining us from**
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# 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

# Liza Whitfield, Loyola University New Orleans 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.

# Keely Shaw, Angelo State University 2021

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?

# Central Questions

- 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.

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 pheumonia. It is a pathetic case, though only one of many."

Project #-1655
Muriel A. Mann
Charleston, S. C.



MRS. MARTIN, PUBLIC HEALTH NURSE.

nothing more. It was almost bare. In a corner some sacking had been nailed to the rafters in order to give a slight amount of privacy to the bed and its occupants, for mother and daughter were in the same bed. I found that the neighbors had become so concerned about the condition of the family that they had taken up a collection to pay for the services of a doctor. So, of course, I could do little for them. I did, however, bathe and freshen them up as much as possible under the circumstances, and left a note for the doctor telling him what I had done. I had given temperature readings. The little girl's 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 pheumonia. It is a pathetic case, though only one of many."

"At nine o'clock every morning I am at my office. I spend an hour checking over reports and letters, and taking telephone calls. Then the doctor and I attend to these calls before visiting at least one, and often two or three, schools before lunch time, where we examine and test the children for various symtoms of disease, including eye-trouble; teeth, heart and lungs affections. Every child is weighed, and a card index is carefully kept of each case. After lunch I go to the hospital and work in the

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 fambly, peyin' house rent, and for all the things I told that man what axed so many questions at the 'Ployment Office. I got my 'stificate to do practical nursin' in 1926. It took me 2 years to git it. It used to be anybody could weit on a 'oman havin' a baby; they could go ahead and cut the cord and tie it if they knowed 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

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"bout another year, and then I can call myself a midwife and pull down $35 a week. Then I won't have to worry 'bout my meat and bread no mo', leastwise not long as 'omans keeps on havin' babies. I means 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' t'all 'bout my ma. I recomembers seein' my pa all right enough. I can guess at my age, but I really don't know jes' how old I is. I tells ever'body that. I 'spect 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'se 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

https://www.loc.gov/resource/wpalh1.12080124/?sp=9&st=text

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

THE EVENING STAR, WASHINGTON, D.

## 'Frontier' Nurses Bring Education and Health to Hill Folk

### Founder of Service, Here For Conference, Tells Of Work in Kentucky

Though officially called the "Frontier Nursing Service," the organization no longer recognizes frontiers but sends its personnel into the most remote sections of the hill country along the Eastern seaboard to bring health anad education.

Here for the White House Conference on Aid to Children in a Democracy, Mrs. Mary Breckinridge, founder of the frontier group, said the desire of the people in the hill country of Kentucky, where she works, is for greater education.

Mrs. Breckinridge, speaking yesterday under the auspices of the Washington committee of the service at the George Hewitt Myers Textile Museum, declared the European wars had reached the Kentucky mountains.

**Nurses Called Home.**

She explained the statement by saying that British nurses on her staff were being called home to care for expectant mothers evacuated from London. Mrs. Breckinridge said she had British nurses because there had been no school of midwifery in the United States.

Mrs. Breckinridge said, however, that a school for midwives had been established in the hospital at Hyden, Ky., and that it is being conducted by the nursing service.

Another problem facing the service, according to Mrs. Breckinridge, is to persuade young doctors specializing in obstetrics to go to Kentucky for six months' work with the Frontier Nursing Service Hospital.

**Covered 800 Miles.**

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.

With headquarter in Wendover, Ky., the service operates out of 19 cities and brings social and medical aid to those people living in remote places. Through inoculation many communicable diseases have been brought under control.

The frontier worker said today the average mountain person was anxious for increased education, but poor communication and great distances over unimproved roads hampered them.

**AIDS MOUNTAIN WORK—** Mrs. Mary Breckinridge, founder of the Frontier Nursing Service, is here for a conference on child aid.
—Star Staff Photo.

**Store Unit Managers'**

“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*

Flickering Dimples and ‘Movie Queen’ Beauty Not Needed to Make Good Nurses, Says Chief

Mrs. Higbee’s Summary of Qualities Necessary and Unnecessary for Women Who Minister to America’s Disabled Fighting Men.

IT IS ESSENTIAL THAT—

They know how to handle surgical cases.
They possess inexhaustible patience.
They have executive ability.
They know how to impart their knowledge to others.
They understand how to “mother” kiddies.
They be tactful, sincere, tireless.

IT IS UNESSENTIAL THAT—

They are pretty.
They can “fluff up” a pillow.
They can write letters for patients.

Quote from Mrs. L. S. Higbee, “Chief of the Navy Nurse Corps at Washington, D.C.”

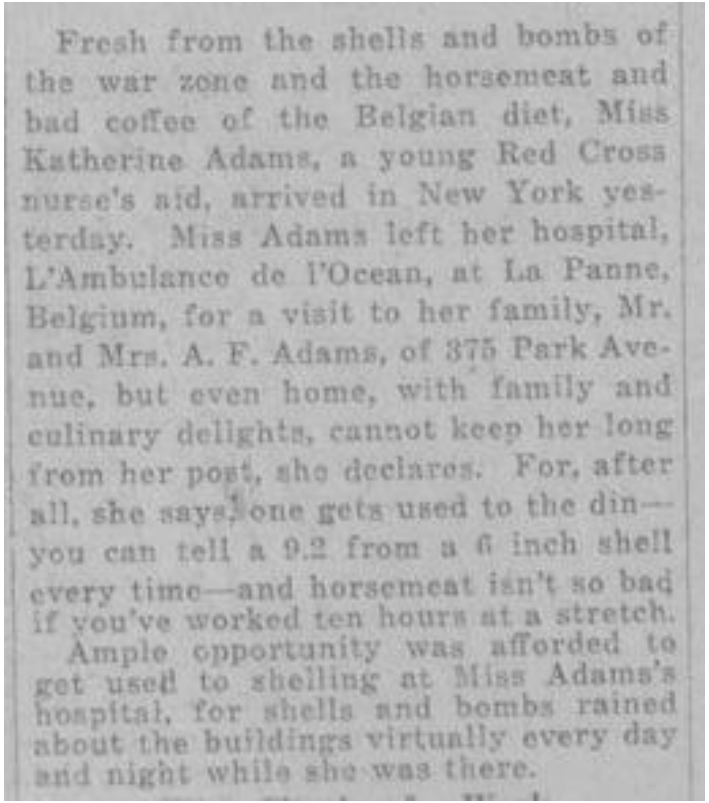
# “Little Nurse Home From War Horrors is Anxious to Go Back”

-New York Tribune, May 4, 1918

Little Nurse Home From War Horrors Is Anxious to Go Back

Miss Katherine Adams, Who Wears Medal for Service, Says Shells and Horsemeat Are Not So Bad

KATHERINE ADAMS



Fresh from the shells and bombs of the war zone and the horsemeat and bad coffee of the Belgian diet, Miss Katherine Adams, a young Red Cross nurse's aid, arrived in New York yesterday. Miss Adams left her hospital, L'Ambulance de l'Ocean, at La Panne, Belgium, for a visit to her family, Mr. and Mrs. A. F. Adams, of 375 Park Avenue, but even home, with family and culinary delights, cannot keep her long from her post, she declares. 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.

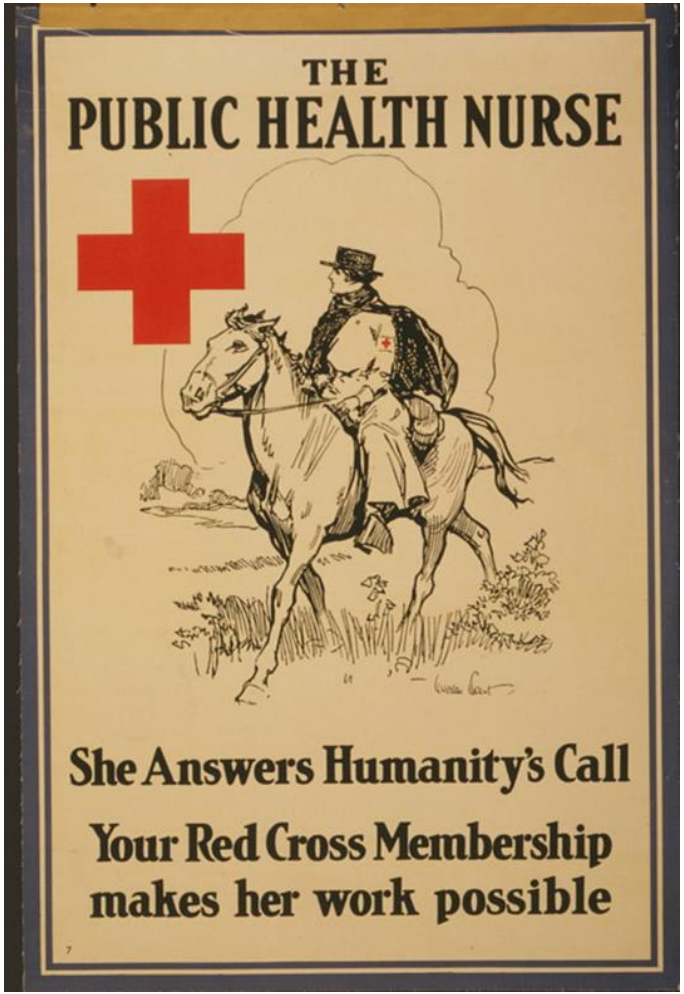
Ample opportunity was afforded to get used to shelling at Miss Adams's hospital, for shells and bombs rained about the buildings virtually every day and night while she was there.

“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"

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# I Never Believed in Angels Until I Met You (1918)

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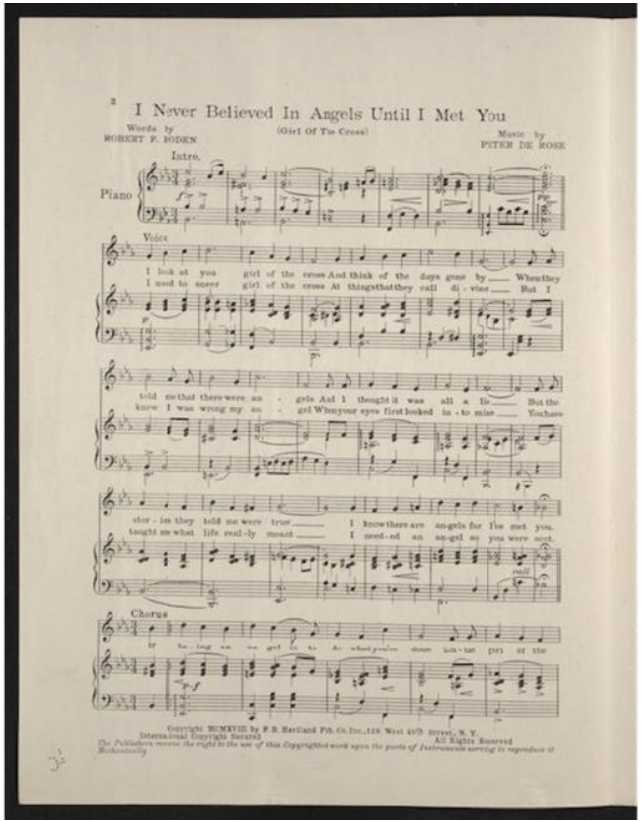


"If being an angel is to do what you've done Little girl of the cross then you surely are one. Risking your life Amid battle's strife, making lives new, nursing them through You are sweetheart and mother to sad hearts that yearn you brighten their sweet dreams of home-fires that burn you were sent from above on a mission of love, I never believed in angels until I met you."

Possible uses?
Feel free to share your ideas!

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**Thank you!**

**Questions? Post them in the chat box!**