

**LAMPS ON THE
PRAIRIE; A HISTORY OF
NURSING IN KANSAS**

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Lamps on the Prairie; A History of Nursing in Kansas by Nursing Committee

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NURSING COMMITTEE

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PRAIRIE; A HISTORY OF
NURSING IN KANSAS**

Lamps on the Prairie

A HISTORY OF NURSING IN KANSAS

COMPILED BY THE WRITERS' PROGRAM OF
THE WORK PROJECTS ADMINISTRATION
IN THE STATE OF KANSAS

Illustrated

SPONSORED BY THE KANSAS STATE NURSES' ASSOCIATION

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Florence Nightingale

"When all . . . have retired for the night, and silence and darkness have settled down . . . she may be observed alone, with a little lamp in her hand, making her solitary rounds.

—Commissioner MacDonald
in Tooley's *"Life of
Florence Nightingale."*



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PREFACE

Lamps on the Prairie began as *The Story of Nursing in Kansas*, but it is more than that. It is also an account of the pioneer men and women of the medical profession, of the public institutions for the care of the sick; of the birth, life, and growth of the State of Kansas. The story of nursing is entwined with that of all the brave people who built the State, never looking backward and asking only for light enough to show them a tomorrow.

Because of their desire to see these scattered threads of the story woven into a cloth, the Kansas State Nurses' Association looked beyond the limited knowledge and the skills of their own group for the writing of this book. The association gratefully acknowledges the services of the director and of the research workers and writers of the Writer's Project whose ability to present the dramatic with simplicity has given to *Lamps on the Prairie* its sincerity of style; and to all those whose cooperation has made this book possible, including physicians whose accounts have been invaluable, the boards of trustees of the various hospitals throughout the State, without whose assistance the latter section of the book could not have been compiled, and lastly the nurses scattered throughout the State, the nation, and many foreign countries. We acknowledge great indebtedness to all.

We offer this account of four hundred years of nursing in Kansas in the hope that each reader may find the facts he seeks accurately and clearly presented, and that they will provide inspiration and pleasure by recalling events of a simpler period. May *Lamps on the Prairie* be worthy of its two-fold purpose, diffusing the influence and perpetuating the memory of those nurses whose life's work it presents.

Signed:

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Cora A. Miller, *Chairman*

FOREWORD

This is a story of Kansas nurses, of the women who served and have served the sick from days when the Sunflower State had no identity, when it was merely a part of the great unexplored Mississippi Basin. It is also an account of the development of the care of the sick from the crude but often effective practices of the Indians to the modern scientific methods available even in remote rural areas.

The story of Kansas nursing and nurses is followed in some detail. It has been assembled, bit by bit, from old diaries, letters, records, unpublished memoirs, and through the warm cooperation of hundreds of nurses and laymen. The compilers hope that it may in some measure show what part nursing has played in Kansas. Kansas has much in common with other States in its nursing and medical history, especially with other States settled in the same period on the Plains and Prairies. This book, however, tells the story from the local viewpoint, to enable all Kansans to understand the struggle that made possible the present nursing and medical services of the State and the significant role of women in this development.

The final manuscript was edited by Katherine A. Kellock of the Washington office of the Writers' Program.

HAROLD C. EVANS, State Supervisor,
Kansas Writers' Program

CHAPTER I

The Background

SINCE 1541 when Coronado and his conquistadors rode across the Plains, seeking Quivira, on the first horses ever seen by the Kansas Indians, the pages of Kansas history have been filled with romance and conflict. Leader of the first white men to set foot on Kansas soil, Coronado claimed the area, with the rest of the western country, for Spain; and for nearly a century and a half that claim, supported by other Spanish expeditions, was uncontested.

For another two centuries the area, as part of the province of Louisiana, was shuttled between France and Spain, going back to France again in 1802. But as none of the claimants assumed more than nominal ownership of the Kansas region it was left to the Indians until May 2, 1803, when the Territory of Louisiana became part of the United States.

On June 26, 1804, Lewis and Clark were at the mouth of the Kansas River on the first lap of the expedition, whose purpose was to find a route through the new territory to the Pacific Ocean, as well as discover how far the British had come down from Canada into this western land. Pike followed in 1806, and in 1819 S. H. Long's expedition steamed up the Missouri in the *Western Engineer*, the first steam boat on rivers west of the Mississippi. Kansas' destiny, however, was not immediately fixed. Pike, although exploring widely, carried back a tale of a "Great American Desert" that included the whole of what became Kansas, and represented it as unfit for white men's habitation. Long's observations confirmed the fallacy; which so thoroughly permeated eastern imaginations that for another quarter of a century, except for a few traders, trappers, and missionaries, Kansas was spurned by white men.

Meanwhile, in 1826, the country west of the State of Missouri had been designated Indian Territory, and the eastern half of Kansas became a receiving reservation for various bands of Indians expelled from the East, beginning with the Shawnee in 1828 and ending with the Wyandotte in 1843. With them arrived the first missionaries, Methodists who came to teach the Shawnee in Wyandotte County in 1829; the first printing press and newspaper—also among the Shawnee—through action of the Rev. Jotham Meeker of the Baptist Mission in Johnson County in 1833-1835; and the first free school, established by the Wyandotte in Wyandotte County in 1844. Arrival of the Indians also brought roads, ferries, trading posts, and government agencies.

In the same period events elsewhere were hastening the region's de-