

## **INTRODUCTION**

The Genesee River originates in the hills of Pennsylvania and flows nearly 200 miles north through western New York into Lake Ontario, a short distance from the City of Rochester. With varying depth and force, this river follows a winding, but defined course through the picturesque hills and valleys of New York State. At five locations in and around Rochester there are surges of useable power due to the extraordinarily high falls within the river.

The Genesee Valley Nurses Association was named after this powerful river 101 years ago and as an organization, has exemplified the river's force. There has been strong and influential membership, sound organizational planning and development, educational spearheading and program implementation, involvement of members in issues effecting nurses, nursing and health care at local, state, national and international levels and change in nursing practices and in health care through coordinated action of the Association.

The Genesee Valley Nurses Association has a **RICH HISTORY**.

### **THE BEGINNING--1891**

Nurses in the Genesee Valley area have historically received national attention for their pioneering efforts.

**1891-**A Directory For Trained Nurses was established to assist doctors and families in selecting and engaging competent nursing services. This Directory was the first of its kind.

**1896-**Nurses from this area participated with a group of twenty colleagues in creating the nucleus of a national organization. They did this with \$100 of borrowed funds. The purpose of the national organization was to develop state and local branches of the nursing organization; to produce a nursing publication; to outline a code of ethics for its members; to elevate standards of nursing education; and to improve the financial welfare of its members. The headquarters of this first national organization consisted of a trunk that housed meeting records and a gavel. This organization became the **American Nurses Association**.

**1897-**The first Code of Ethics was established and addressed both the standards of nursing education and special interests of the nursing profession.

**1899-**Sophie Palmer and Eva Allerton first recommended that a state nurses association be formed in New York State for the purpose of securing legislation that would support nurses.

**1900-**The Monroe County Association of Registered Nurses, Inc. was organized with thirty charter members who were graduates of Rochester Training Schools. This was the first local nursing group of its kind and was the forerunner of the **Genesee Valley Nurses Association**. The goals of this organization were: advancement of nursing standards; furtherance of the efficient care of the sick; furtherance of cordial relations among association members and other nurses throughout the state; and acquisition and maintenance of a Club House.

**1900-** A journal entitled "Trained Nurse and Hospital Review" was started in Rochester. This journal became the **American Journal of Nursing**. Sophia French Palmer served as its editor.. Miss Palmer was the Superintendent of Nurses at the City Hospital, now Rochester General Hospital. She held the role of editor until her death in 1920. The journal was published out of a small house in Rochester until 1922 with 107,000 voluntary subscribers.

**1900-**The National League For Nursing Education was started in Rochester by Rochester nurses.

**1901-**New York State Nurses Association was organized.

**1902-**On October 21, 1902 the Armstrong Bill was passed. This was Rochester's history making event as it was designed by Rochesterians. The Armstrong Bill was introduced at a New York State Nurses Association meeting, held in Rochester. Its thrust was to place all schools of nursing

under regulation of the University of the State of New York, which entailed administration of state examinations and registration of all nurse graduates of accredited schools of nursing. This design has served as a model for laws regulating nursing in other states. Momentum for the passage of this bill was inspired by stirring addresses given by Susan B. Anthony and Dr. William S. Ely on the need for standards and regulation. Sophia Palmer authored the plan. Through her efforts the title "Registered Nurse" was coined. She became the first president of the New York State Board of Nurse Examiners.

1903-The Nurse Registration Bill was signed into law, becoming the Nation's second Nurse Practice Act.

### **THE WAR YEARS—1917-1920**

1917-The United States entered into World War I. Nurses and physicians were recruited to serve their country in the armed services. This created shortages on the home front. Inactive nurses were recruited back into practice and volunteers were trained and used to assist in giving care to patients. Families were guided in giving care to family members at home.

1919-At the close of World War I a small group of Rochester nurses envisioned a "Club House" for nurses. This house could offer respite to some, a meeting place for groups and short term room rental to nurses new to the city. \$21,000 were collected through contributions from various groups. The house that was purchased was located at 34 South Goodman Street and had formerly provided space for Public Health and the AJN editorial staff. The Club House was renovated and eventually deeded to the Genesee Valley Nurses Association. It was sold in August, 1939 due to financial losses. Money from the sale was invested in government bonds.

1919-On January 21, 1919 The Monroe County Association of Registered Nurses, Inc. was organized as The Genesee Valley Nurses Association and on June 11, 1919 it was incorporated as District 2 of the New York State Nurses Association. The first president of GVNA was Katherine DeWitt. Five counties were included in District 2—Alleghany, Livingston, Monroe, Ontario and Wayne.

1920-Nurses throughout the nation contributed to a fund totaling \$51,000 for building the Florence Nightingale School of Nursing in Bordeaux, France as the American Nurses Association's memorial to nurses who died in World War I.

-Major revisions were made to the 1903 Nurse Practice Act of New York State.

### **A NEW ERA—1929-1941**

Education of nursing students, "continuation" education for graduate nurses, standards of practice and working conditions for hospital nurses and private duty nurses received great attention during the next decade. Of significance was the collegiality and unification of various organizations toward achieving common goals—GVNA, The League For Nursing Education and the Nursing Superintendents of Local Hospitals. Some committees were formed for the purpose of planning for future supportive structures.

1929-The first Private Duty Nurse Section in New York State was founded under the auspices of GVNA. Membership in the District was required for acceptance in the "Nurse's Official Registry". This Section preceded NYSNA's Private Duty Nurse Section by one year.

1934-An eight hour work day was established for Private Duty Nurses in Rochester Hospitals.

1937-Private Duty Nurse's salaries were increased from \$4 to \$5 per day. GVNA was influential in effecting this change as well as others that touched the work life of nurses.

-A Community Nursing Council was formed to support the Private Duty Nurse movements. Legal Counsel advised that existence of this Council would change their status and relationship with GVNA. The Private Duty Nurses needed GVNA support so the decision was made to disband the Council. The Council was reconstituted several years later.

-It was recognized that there were unlicensed nurses working as nurses. The State's licensing laws did not permit licensure to nurses from other states, nor graduates from schools that did not

meet standards. The Esquirol Bill was introduced in the State Legislature "to safeguard the health and welfare of the public by setting standards necessary for licensure and to provide a mechanism for nurses to secure a license to practice as a Registered Nurse." This bill also provided for a "Second Class" registration, the Nursing Aide. The Esquirol Bill did not pass, but was in part adopted by Senator Feld and Assembly Member Todd.

1938-The Nursing Profession and public urged the 1938 New York State Legislature to correct the lack of control of standards for qualified nurses by enacting a nursing law as safe as the acts governing other professions.

-On January 10<sup>th</sup> the Todd-Feld Bill was introduced in the New York State Legislature. This became the Nursing Practice Act of 1938.. After a major struggle in Albany the bill was passed by the Assembly on March 17<sup>th</sup>. GVNA supported passage of this bill.

-The Bureau of Information was created to assist members of the District to be in closer touch with state interests.

-An Institute Committee was formed to plan and sponsor educational programs called "INSTITUTES".

-GVNA was instrumental in regulating nurse's salaries and hours of work in District 2.

1939-A program for vocational counseling was developed by and housed at the GVNA offices.

-Post graduate courses for Private Duty Nurses were offered.

- Running through the historical documents is strong encouragement to nurses to continue their education and to keep current in practice; and the appearance of fund-raising projects sponsored by GVNA in support of education. The first fund raiser, documented in 1938, was called AUTUMN FROLIC. There were a number of these through the years. Scholarships were offered to nurses who met specific criteria. The Medical Society of Monroe County, whose offices were at the Academy of Medicine provided space for GVNA's educational programs.

1940-The largest membership recorded in the history of GVNA-1640 members.

-Public information was very important during this period. On May 5<sup>th</sup> a radio broadcast on "Nursing Facilities in the Community" was made by Judith Dignin, District 2 President and sponsored by the County of Monroe Medical Society.

-An Education Committee was appointed to explore the possibility of beginning a Bachelor of Science Program for nurses under the auspices of the University Of Rochester Extension Department.

-In November the Board of Directors approved formation of a Men's Section in GVNA.

1941-A Scholarship and Loan Fund was established by GVNA to enable graduate nurses to study at a university or to take clinical post graduate courses.

The Education Committee of the reconstituted Community Nursing Council was successful in negotiating plans with the University of Rochester to establish education courses for nurses. The University asked that the community contribute \$1000 per year for three years. GVNA contributed \$500 annually for the next three years. Course focus was Public Health and Nursing Education.

## **THE SECOND WORLD WAR—1941-1946**

1941- A District 2 Defense Committee was formed. There was great concern for health care in this area. Doctors and nurses were leaving for military service. Two Reserve Units were organized—First Reserve and Second Reserve, both ready to be called into active military service. Civilians needed care. In collaboration with the Genesee Valley League for Nursing Education, GVNA initiated programs to prepare inactive nurses for return to practice through refresher courses and programs designed to attract students into nursing. The Red Cross offered Home Nursing Courses and Aide Preparation. A Hospital Nurse's Defense Committee was formed to plan community emergency response. Again, the District pulled all of its resources

together to support those serving in the military and those caring for patients on the home front. GVNA provided leadership in these efforts.

1943-The Industrial Nurses in District 2 area began exploring the possibility of forming a Section in GVNA.

1944-Two new Sections were brought into GVNA-the Industrial Nurses and the Institutionalized Staff Nurses.

-A Committee to study Personnel Practices in Hospitals was created; and in 1945, recommendations regarding the work life of Institutional Staff Nurses were sent to hospitals in the area.

-The University of Rochester , School of Liberal and Applied Studies offered a degree program toward a Bachelor of Science in Nursing Education. Esther M. Thompson was the Director.

-Nurses from District 2 went to the Southern Tier to assist in caring for patients in a Polio emergency.

1945-County Nurse Clubs were formed in Alleghany and Ontario Counties. These clubs provided an opportunity for nurses in outlying areas to feel and be more involved in the activities of GVNA.

-The Rochester Hospital Council, recently formed, invited a representative from District 2 to all meetings where nursing issues would be discussed—salaries, vacations and health programs.

-GVNA employed its first Executive Secretary.

-The United States Civil Service legally accepted nursing as a Professional and Scientific Service. A plus toward recognition of Nursing.

#### **POST WAR ADVANCEMENT—1946-1959**

1946-The concept of collective bargaining was introduced to nurses in District 2. This was a topic of interest at ANA and NYSNA. A special committee was appointed by GVNA to study the question of and issues associated with collective bargaining.

-GVNA Personnel Practice Committee recommendations resulted in the beginning of a 44 hour work week for nurses.

1947-The Rochester Regional Hospital Council was created to coordinate and supply services to hospitals, standardize personnel policies, salaries, benefits and to assure standards of care. Esther Thompson was the Nurse Consultant to this group.

1949-The Regional Nursing Group was organized by Esther Thompson on March 24<sup>th</sup> to address current problems and trends in nursing.

- District 2 won the State Membership Cup for the greatest increase in membership in 1948.

-Hospital Day. For the first time a special day was designated in commemoration of Florence Nightingale's birthday.

-A health plan, sponsored by District 2 was implemented for members.

-The Student Nurse Section was organized in District 2 to assist students toward professional maturity and to encourage participation in the organization after graduation. On February 27, 1950 fifty-seven students became charter members.

-The Speakers Bureau was reactivated to keep the public informed about the aims of nursing and to interpret the civic and community interests of nurses and nursing in health promotion. Throughout the 30s and 40s GVNA had a close working relationship with representatives from other organizations. Together they addressed problems related to health care and to nursing. GVNA had representation on the Genesee Valley League for Nursing Education, Council of Rochester and Regional Hospitals, Rochester Regional Council, Rochester Branch of the American Association Of Industrial Nurses , Community Nursing Council, Monroe County Inter-professional Council and the Rochester Chamber of Commerce.

**1950-**The Nurses Official Registry was moved to rooms adjoining the GVNA offices. This became a center to serve both the community and members of the profession. A Counseling and Placement Service for RNs and LPNs was started.

**1951-**Two county branches of GVNA were started—one in Ontario County and the second in Alleghany.

-A Nurse Welfare Committee was appointed and developed a new health insurance plan for GVNA members

**1952-**Emphasis was placed on keeping District 2 Nurses informed about legislative issues. The official publication, "TPR" became an important vehicle for information sharing.

**1954-**The Student Nurse Section of GVNA became part of Area 2 of the Student Nurses Association of NYSNA.

**1958-**An Economic Security Committee was formed, representing both education and service, and was the spring board for GVNA's EACT/INSA Section.

**1959-**Yates County became the sixth county to join GVNA.

## **TWO DECADES OF ACTION-- 1960-1980**

**1961-**Discussions on Associate Degree/Community College preparation of nurses began at National, State and District levels

-The Economic Security Committee of GVNA had close contact with the Patient Care Planning Council of Rochester and shared data regarding the welfare of nurses in the region.

**1965-**Committee on Professional Practice was formed and chaired by Claire E.O'Neil, Director of Nursing Practice at Strong Memorial Hospital.

**1965-**The American Nurses Association published a position statement on the preparation of nurses in the United States. The ANA proposed that Professional Nurses be prepared at the Baccalaureate level in institutions of higher learning. This paper also addressed the role and preparation of Technical Nurses, prepared in Community Colleges. The paper was forwarded to all State Nurses Associations for planned action.

**1966-**New York State Nurses Association responded to ANA's call to action by authorizing NYSNA's Committee on Education to develop a blueprint for the transition of nursing education in New York State. The "Blueprint For The Education Of Nurses In New York State" was approved by the Board of Directors of NYSNA on October 13, 1966. In addition to addressing Professional and Technical nursing education, the Blueprint called for the opening of no additional Diploma schools and for plans to assist diploma graduates and Licensed Practical Nurses in furthering their education. Contained in this document were recommendations to districts for developing committee structures that would support implementation of the Blueprint. It was expected that the committees would represent professional nurses and members of community planning groups (education, medicine, industry, labor, civic leaders and consumers) reflecting the geographic boundaries defined by the State Department for Commerce as the "Economic Areas of New York State". District 2 rose to the challenge.

**1967-**The Committee on Education was appointed by GVNA. This committee of nurses initiated preliminary planning involving the nine counties comprising the defined economic area. The Community Group was identified and appointed. Work began.

**1968-**The Community Planning Committee for Nursing Education was formed as a combined group. Representatives from this committee were invited to serve on other community committees as The Genesee Region Health Planning Council and the Genesee Region Educational Alliance for Health Personnel. Communication and collaboration were vital.

**1969-**The Community Planning Committee for Nursing Education appointed a Steering Committee to handle the administrative details of this monumental project. Four sub-committees were formed to analyze the data collected and to write essential reports. A grant was written to HEW in support of a Project Director, which was approved, but not funded. The work continued.

-Publication of the results of the "National Commission For The Study Of Nursing and Nursing Education" were released. This Commission was headed by Dr. Jerome Lysaught of the University of Rochester and was based in Rochester. Considerable input was given toward this study by nurses in District 2. The findings supported ANA and NYSNA positions.

1970-1971-The summary and findings of the Community Planning Committee for Nursing Education study led to a one year project, funded by the United States Public Health Service and directed by Dr. Charles Russell. The Elmira Region collaborated in the study. Sixteen recommendations resulted, dealing with expanded role of the nurse, appropriate education, broader definition of nursing education, continuing education, flexibility for LPN education and inter-institutional planning for use of clinical facilities. Action plans were made. Baccalaureate and Associate Degree Programs were strengthened, as was Continuing Education. Diploma Programs in District 2 were phased out.

-A Task Force on Continuing Education was appointed by GVNA.

1972-New York State Nurses Association sponsored the introduction of the Laverne-Pisani Bill that offered a clear and updated definition of the practice of nursing. This was passed by the New York State Legislature on March 15, 1972.

1973-New York State Nurses Association attempted to sponsor introduction of a bill for mandatory Continuing Education. This program met with great disagreement in District 2 as well by nurses across the State. The bill was not passed, but Continuing Education was in the forefront.

1974-The Task Force on Continuing Education became a full GVNA Committee.

1975-Refresher Course for RNs, originated by GVNA was held at St. John Fisher College and was later picked up by Roberts Wesleyan College.

-District 2 was the first to pioneer "District only" membership. The response was positive.

1977-The Nurses Official Registry separated from GVNA and incorporated as the Rochester Nurses Registry.

1978-Much emphasis was given to Holistic Healing. Primary Nursing became the "in" approach to nursing care. Educational programs supported both.

-Rochester's Mayor proclaimed 1978 "Year of the Nurse".

1979- Seneca County became the seventh county to join GVNA.

-The GVNA Continuing Education Committee supported the writing of a three year grant entitled "A Regional Approach To Continuing Education In Nursing." This was funded with \$500,000 by DHHS, involved thirteen counties and was considered successful. Although the Project Committee extended beyond the boundaries of District 2, several members of the GVNA committee were actively involved in this project and its outcome. Marilyn McClellan directed the overall project and Carol Henretta coordinated its operations.

## **RECRUITMENT TO NURSING AND RECOGNITION OF ACHIEVEMENTS**

1980-A representative from GVNA was appointed to the Board of Directors of the Genesee Finger Lakes Health System.

1981-The Community Planning Committee for Nursing Education became the Education Committee for GVNA.

1982-GVNA supported the local Midwives in their struggle for recognition and reimbursement by HMOs.

1983- The Council on Nurse Practitioners was organized.

- A slide tape on nursing was developed for distribution in local high schools.

1984-Increased emphasis was given to poor representation of nursing in the media. All health related programs were monitored and critiqued and feedback given to program sponsors.

- A celebration for National Nurses Day was reactivated.

**1985-**The Education Committee developed a booklet on nursing for distribution to high school guidance counselors as a way of interesting students in a career in nursing. Breakfast meetings for counselors were held.

**1987-**GVNA instituted an Awards Program to recognize achievements of District nurses. Four awards will be given to District nurses each year—Nursing Practice, Nursing Administration, Legislative, Nursing Student Leadership and Honorary Recognition. Nurse Educators and a Media Developer have been recognized also.

**1988-**GVNA became increasingly involved in community HMOs regarding direct reimbursement to Nurse Practitioners.

**1989-**As the nursing shortage became a problem in District 2, the Education Committee produced a video tape for distribution in elementary schools.

The first computer was purchased for GVNA office use.

### **FOCUS ON INDEPENDENT PRACTICE AND THE IMAGE OF NURSING—1990-2000**

**1990-**The newsletter was reactivated and titled, "GVNA VIEWS."

-GVNA participated in a National Campaign to improve the image of Nursing and to generate interest in the profession of nursing, newspaper articles were submitted, the Media Contacts Directory was updated and a Nursing Resources Directory was compiled and distributed to representatives of the media for reference.

**1991-**In response to the New York State mandate for periodic participation in the "Identification and Reporting of Child Abuse Course" GVNA sponsored a series of presentations.

**1993-**GVNA moved to new office space in the Academy of Medicine.

-The Special Interest Groups now active are Nurse Practitioners, Psychiatric Mental Health and Gerontology. GVNA supported the needle exchange program sponsored by AIDS Rochester.

**1994-**Children's Health and Community Health Special Interest Groups were started.

- A strong program for continuing education was initiated, giving contact hours for participation.

-Holistic Special Interest Group started.

**1995-**A GVNA member was appointed to the Board of the Rochester Health Commission.

**1996-**GVNA received a \$3,000 grant to purchase a computer and software.

**1999-** Development of a web page began.

### **THE NEW MILLENNIUM**

**2000-**GVNA launched a web site in November.

- Partnered with Nazareth College in a Division of Nursing DHHS grant to facilitate baccalaureate education in the Finger Lakes Region.

- Received funding from the National Historic Records and Publications Administration to establish the GVNA archives.

- Conducted a membership phon-a-thon

- Participated in a Rochester Health Care Community Education Forum addressing the state of health care in Rochester. As a result two support groups for nurses were established.

- GVNA sponsored a Nursing Coalition Survey. This survey addressed the nursing shortage by identifying satisfiers and dissatisfiers in practice and was distributed to all District 2 nurses. The data are currently being analyzed.

## **GVNA—A CONTRIBUTOR TO THE NEW YORK STATE NURSES ASSOCIATION**

Throughout the years GVNA has supported and worked toward implementation of NYSNA's programs. District 2 members have served on committees, Councils, The Board of Directors—in elected and in appointed positions. District 2 is proud that three of its members have served as President of NYSNA. These nurses were;

1955-1959—Esther M. Thompson, R.N., M.A.

1974-1975—Janet P. Mance, R.N., M.S.

1993-1995—Mary Eileen Callan, R.N., M.S.

Two nurses have expanded reached out to influence health care and the impact of nursing by running for the New York State Legislature. These were Mary Eileen Callan and Christine Saltzberg. Although neither won, a trail was blazed for future attempts.

### **TODAY**

Nursing and Nurses have made much progress since the 1890s. We continue to encounter challenges, whether related directly to our practice as professionals or to health care in general. As an organization GVNA strives to encourage membership to facilitate involvement in educational meetings, legislative action, interpreting nursing to the community and in health care issues. This district has representatives serving on strategic community committees—Rochester Health Care Commission, Monroe County Health Bureau, Community Task Force on Health Care, Finger Lakes Nursing Workforce and Rochester Health Care Reform. Through these representatives, we have a voice that is heard now and will be in the future.

### **A NOTE FROM THE PRESIDENT**

As President, I feel GVNA's future lies in working with nurses in and on all levels of employment and education, maintaining the link with NYSNA and ANA. Establishing a collaborative organizational connection with Licensed Practical Nurses to offer collegial support, education and opportunities for possible advancement, demonstrates cohesiveness within the nursing profession. As a professional organization, we need to strive to grow and maintain cohesiveness with all our nursing colleagues. In the community, GVNA must continue to be proactive as well as interactive with the business of health care, both in the industry and in education. GVNA's future will be formed by its members, the demands of those members and response to those demands.

Linda Baier, President, GVNA

Prepared by: Marilyn G. McClellan, R.N., M.S.ED., Ed.D

### **REFERENCES**

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