Nursing Historical Highlights
Forever Caring, dedicated October 7, 2003

Gift of Mayo Clinic in recognition of nursing colleagues and the philanthropic leadership of Marilyn J. and Warren F. Bateman.

Artist Gloria Tew has expressed the primary value of Mayo Clinic - “the needs of the patient come first” - in the concept of this bronze tableau. Figures of nurses are arranged to portray the retrospective histories of Saint Marys Hospital, founded by the Sisters of Saint Francis, and the Rochester Methodist Hospital. Contemporary figures of a female and male nurse show the response of the nursing profession to current and future patient care needs. Nurses in advanced practice, education and research, the threefold mission of Mayo Clinic, are shown in the nurse anesthetist, the graduate nurse, and the nurse with a patient’s chart.

The tableau also honors the former schools of nursing in Rochester by depicting their distinctive caps: Saint Marys School of Nursing (nurse with patient chart); Methodist Kahler School of Nursing (nurse with patient in a wheelchair), and Saint Marys School of Practical Nursing (nurse with serving tray).
The following timeline offers insight into the rich history of nursing at Mayo Clinic Rochester. From Mayo’s beginning, nursing has been a significant part of our education, practice, and research. Nursing at Mayo has mirrored the growth of the Mayo Clinic and the affiliated hospitals. While this timeline depicts nursing highlights, each of these points in time has a full history of its own. For more information, about any of these events, please contact the Mayo Clinic Historical Unit, or the Chair of the Mayo Nursing History Committee.

1889 - Saint Marys Hospital opens. The 27-bed facility is the first general hospital in southeastern Minnesota. Edith Graham (office nurse and anesthetist for the Mayo brothers, who later married Dr. C.H. Mayo) is appointed temporary head nurse to teach the basics of nursing to the Sisters of Saint Francis.

Nurse anesthetist specialty begins at the Mayo Clinic.

1906 - Saint Marys Hospital Training School for Nurses is founded by Sister Joseph Dempsey. Anna Jamme, a graduate of Johns Hopkins School of Nursing, is appointed the first superintendent of the two-year program. The program was lengthened to 3 years in 1914 and was accredited by the State Board of Nurse Examiners in 1915. The name was changed to the Saint Marys School of Nursing in 1932 reflecting the growing stature of nursing as a profession.

Sister Joseph Dempsey established the Sister Joseph Endowment Fund for advanced studies in Nursing.

1907 - The first Kahler Hotel, a combined hotel-hospital, opens.

1916 - Colonial Hospital, forerunner of Rochester Methodist Hospital, opens as a hotel-hospital for convalescent patients.

Kahler Hospital and Hotel hires graduate nurses as employees. At this time, the nursing care delivery system at Saint Marys Hospital (with the exception of private duty nursing) involved student nurses providing nursing care under the supervision of one
Sister of St. Francis on each floor. This method of practice continued until 1936 when Saint Marys Hospital hires its first graduate nurses to fill a shortage of nurses caused by the Depression.

1918 - Colonial Hospital Training School for Nurses, a one-year registered nurse program, is started to alleviate the shortage of nurses aggravated by World War I. Mary J. Gill, superintendent of nurses, added the operation of the school to her responsibilities.

Saint Marys Hospital Isolation Hospital opened in the former Lincoln Hotel, east of the hospital. One of its main uses was to treat patients affected by the Flu Epidemic of that era.

Sister Domitilla Du Rocher, after graduating from Saint Marys Training School for Nurses, enrolls at Columbia University, Department of Nursing, the first program offered for graduate nurses in the United States. Sister Domitilla served as instructor and director of Saint Marys Training School and Hospital Administrator from 1920 to 1955.

1919 - Colonial Hospital begins a two-year registered nurse program. In 1920, Colonial and Allied Hospitals’ Training School for Nurses begins a three-year registered nurse programs and obtains Accreditation by the Minnesota Board of Nursing. Bertha S. Johnson is appointed as general director of the nursing school. Nursing service and nursing education is divided for the first time. In 1921, the program’s name changed to Kahler Hospitals School of Nursing.

1919 – 1922 - Worrall Hospital opens with services for ear, eye, nose, and throat.

Saint Marys Hospital - surgery, pediatrics, medical, and obstetrics
Kahler Hospital - urology, orthopedics, and general surgery

1923 - Saint Marys Training School adds postgraduate courses in surgical nursing and operating room technique for registered nurses

Sister Domitilla introduces patient care study to direct student’s attention to patient observation and learning in the clinical area.
1936 - A five-year program leading to the degree of bachelor of science in nursing is established at the College of Saint Teresa in Winona. Clinical experience is provided at Saint Marys Hospital under the supervision and faculty of Saint Marys Hospital School of Nursing. In 1947, the program is shortened to four years. Classes and faculty are now separate from Saint Marys School of Nursing.

1937 - Saint Marys Hospital appoints Ruth Hugelen as the school’s first full time supervisor of clinical instruction. Formal ward teaching is instituted, mostly taught by head nurses under the direction of the faculty.

The first men admitted to Saint Marys School of Nursing.

1939 - Kahler School of Nursing appoints Marian Zilley as its first supervisor of clinical instruction. This provided an opportunity for the school to assume more responsibility for the teaching that was done in the clinical area.

1942 - Red Cross volunteer nurse aides appeared on wards at Saint Marys Hospital.

The first post-anesthesia care room opens at Saint Marys Hospital.

1943 - Nurse Cadet Corp Programs initiated at Saint Marys School of Nursing and Kahler Hospital School of Nursing. The Cadet Nurse Corps was a government program to facilitate the training of nurses in response to the nursing shortage during World War II. The government subsidized tuition and expedited (shortened) the nurse training program. Participants were expected to provide military, government, or civilian nursing services through the duration of war.

Saint Marys Hospital sponsors a Home Nursing Service and Well-Baby Clinic giving students an opportunity to observe and practice nursing outside of the hospital in the community. This service brought care to the elderly and chronically ill in their own homes and was directed by Sister Eymard Tracy.
1946 - First psychiatric unit opens at Saint Marys Hospital headed by Sister Julie Erne.

1948 - Rochester School of Practical Nursing and Homemaking, a one year program, established by Sister Domitilla to meet a nursing shortage in a cost efficient and timely manner. The school was renamed in 1980 to Saint Marys School of Practical Nursing.

1954 - Rochester Methodist Hospital, made up of the Colonial, Worrall, and Worrall Annex, is formed with the support of the Methodist Board of Hospitals and Homes.

The school is renamed Methodist-Kahler School of Nursing, and Rochester State Junior College provided instructional services for some classes.

1956 – The first intensive care units open at Saint Marys Hospital for neurology/neurosurgery and post-cardiac surgery.

1957 - A prototype research nursing station- the first radial nursing station in the country- is developed at Rochester Methodist Hospital. A dermatology program is initiated at Rochester Methodist Hospital. The Foreign Nurse Exchange Program begins at both hospitals in order to alleviate a nursing shortage.

1959 – Outpatient Hypertension Clinic opened and would become the first nurse managed clinic.

1963 – Methodist-Kahler School of Nursing and Saint Marys School of Nursing initiate student-centered education with instructors rather than supervisors from nursing service.

1964 - Saint Marys Hospital establishes separate Nursing Service Department from the School of Nursing. Sister Kateri is appointed the first director of Nursing Service. Sister Julie Erne is the director of School of Nursing.

1966 - Rochester Methodist Hospital occupies new building. A 1927 graduate of the Kahler School of Nursing, Esther Roesti directs Nursing Services at Rochester Methodist Hospital and plays a key role in the planning and research process for the new hospital building.

The Summer III program begins at Rochester Methodist Hospital. This annual program offers learning experiences during which nursing students participate in direct and indirect patient care. Each summer, 150 students from throughout the United States take part in the program. The program was expanded to Saint Marys Hospital in 1991.

Esther Roesti
1967 - Ward secretaries and escorts are used at Rochester Methodist Hospital as support services to nursing.

1970 – Methodist-Kahler School of Nursing and Saint Marys School of Nursing graduate their last diploma classes. There were 3825 graduates from the Methodist-Kahler School of Nursing and 3865 graduates from the Saint Marys School of Nursing.

Rochester State Junior College graduates its first associate degree RN class.

1971 – The critical care education program is developed, a forerunner of nurse internship program.

1972 - Saint Marys Hospital appoints first assistant administrator for Nursing Service.

Central clinical educators are responsible for orientation and teaching of nursing staff.

The infection control program is initiated at Saint Marys Hospital and Rochester Methodist Hospital. Rochester Methodist Hospital appoints Ruth Slade and Saint Marys Hospital appoints Alice Haldorson as nurse epidemiologists.

The Nursing Liaison Committee established between Saint Marys Hospital and Rochester Methodist Hospital to establish mutual program planning and charting forms.

1974 - Rochester Vocational School now provides nursing assistant education.

1975 - Helen Jameson, Director of Nursing Service, Rochester Methodist Hospital, appointed assistant administrator of Patient Care Services.

1976 - Saint Marys Hospital committed to the value of clinical nurse specialists and planned for the progressive addition of this role.

Rochester Methodist Hospital begins affiliation with Luther College nursing program.

Both hospitals end the foreign exchange program.

Rochester Methodist Hospital hires nurse educators to assist nurses to incorporate teaching in their roles.


All obstetrics consolidates to Rochester Methodist Hospital. Barbara Moulton, coordinates the consolidation efforts.
1979 – Primary Nursing care delivery system implemented at Rochester Methodist Hospital.

1981 – Nurses use a patient classification system to determine workload at both Rochester Methodist Hospital and Saint Marys Hospital. The use and refining of the system over time, has resulted in Mayo Nursing staffing to patient need instead of ratios.

1982 – Rochester Methodist Hospital offers 12-hour shifts for intensive care nurses. Over time, this shift option has become very prevalent on all units.

1986 - Mayo Clinic, Rochester Methodist Hospital and Saint Marys Hospital integrate within the Mayo Foundation.

1987 – Nurse Exchange Program initiated between Mayo Clinic Rochester hospitals and Mayo Clinic Scottsdale and later with Mayo Clinic Jacksonville.

1989 – The Mayo Center for Nursing was established to coordinate continuing education, nursing research, and nursing practice. With Anne G. Jones (Miers), appointed its first director.

1990 – The Nursing Research Department implemented under Marilyn Stiles, associate director.

Mayo Nursing History Committee established through the Mayo Center for Nursing.

1991 - Mayo Department of Nursing is formed when Saint Marys Hospital and Rochester Methodist Hospital nursing service departments unify nursing practice and procedures. Doreen K. Frusti is appointed Chair, Department of Nursing.

Nursing Education Committee and the Nursing Clinical Practice Committee are established.

Nurses are eligible to apply for academic appointment and promotion in the Mayo Clinic College of Medicine.

Mayo Continuing Nursing Education (CNE) was accredited as a provider of continuing nursing education the first time by American Nurses Credentialing Center's Commission on Accreditation. It was accredited for six years. Subsequently, Mayo CNE has been accredited for six years again in 1997 and 2003.
1992 – Masters degree required for nurse administrator role; BSN required for Nurse Manager role; Masters degree required for nursing education specialist.

First annual Department of Nursing Poster Fair held with a shared-decision making theme. This poster fair has evolved to an annual event with over 70 poster presentations per year.

1st Annual Nursing Research Conference sponsored by the Mayo Center for Nursing, Sigma Theta Tau, Winona State University.

Mayo nurses consult in military hospitals across Saudi Arabia through a Mayo Medical Ventures contract with Mowarid-Witikar Saudi Arabia, Ltd. In addition, there are opportunities for nurses to visit hospitals and consult in Japan.

The first Quest for Quality, a national medical/surgical nursing conference, is held.

1993 - Mayo Center for Nursing incorporated with the Mayo Department of Nursing.

1994 - Saint Marys School of Practical Nursing graduates its last class.

Collaborative Practice Framework implemented resulting in increased presence of clinical nurse specialists and nursing education specialists to support professional nursing practice.

Recognizing the ever-increasing complexity of the hospitalized patient, the Department of Nursing offered the “Enhanced Education Program” for LPNs. The program covered the education costs for LPNs to attend registered nurse education programs.

Mayo nurses participated in the Pine Ridge/Mayo/NASA Telemedicine Satellite Demonstration Project, with Pine Ridge Indian Reservation Hospital, South Dakota.

1996 - Nurses on all patient care units are given option to move to colored scrub suits rather than white uniforms.

1997 - Mayo Clinic Hospitals receive the Magnet Hospital Recognition Designation. Mayo Clinic Hospitals are the fifth hospital in the nation to be designated as a Magnet Hospital. The Magnet Recognition Program® was developed by the American Nurses Credentialing Center to recognize hospitals that provide the very best nursing care and uphold the tradition of professional nursing practice. In 2002, Mayo Clinic Hospitals are re-designated as a Magnet Hospital.

Mayo Clinic’s first midwives are hired -Marie Hastings-Tolsma and Susan Skinner.

Integration of Transfusion/IV Services nurses (55 full time equivalents) from the Department of Laboratory Medicine into the Department of Nursing.
1999 – His Royal Highness King Hussein of Jordan established the King Hussein Nursing Research Program in 1999 in acknowledgement of the nursing care received while he was a patient at the Mayo Clinic.

2000 – Ambulatory nurse supervisors initiate monthly meetings. This is the first time ambulatory RN supervisors have met as an organized group.

Nursing Diversity Mentoring Program implemented.

2002 – Implementation of the RN Building Block Salary Model for direct care nurses across Mayo Clinic Rochester settings. The model starts with base salary range for all RNs and then has ranges (blocks) added related to education and schedule of the work unit (day, extended hours, 24/7).

Certification required for Clinical Nurse Specialist role by Minnesota Board of Nursing

2003 – Dedication of the Forever Caring sculpture commissioned by the Mayo Clinic to honor the nursing profession and the philanthropic leadership of Warren and Marilyn Bateman, whose vision and generosity made possible the Mayo Nurses Atrium of the Gonda Building.


2004-2005 – Integration of Mayo nursing is complete with ambulatory and surgical nursing joining the Department of Nursing, bringing the number of Department of Nursing Staff to 6,200.

2005 – Data Management Strategic Plan is implemented to synergize the use of data in advancing the profession and science of nursing. For the first time, Nursing funded programmer/analyst positions are dedicated to support Nursing in this endeavor.

Pamela O. Johnson is appointed Vice-Chair, Department of Nursing and is responsible for overall management and coordination of function of the clinical nursing practice divisions.

Bateman Funds are established to provide monies for promotion of academic faculty joint appointments.

Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations (JCAHO) surveyed ambulatory care areas for the first time and accredited fully.

2006 – Mayo Nursing is awarded the prestigious Magnet Prize for the Nursing Genomics Program. This prize was awarded in recognition of the advances Mayo Nursing has made in the areas of nursing genomics.
“Nursing Historical Highlights” was compiled by the Mayo Nursing History Committee.

Not all of the nurses in the Mayo Foundation fall within the Department of Nursing. Their histories are equally valuable and may be found in the records of their respective departments.