



American World War II
Heritage City

Valley City
North Dakota

The WWII Cadet Nurse Corps of Mercy



(Above) 1947-1949 Mercy Hospital student nurses which included Nurse Cadets.

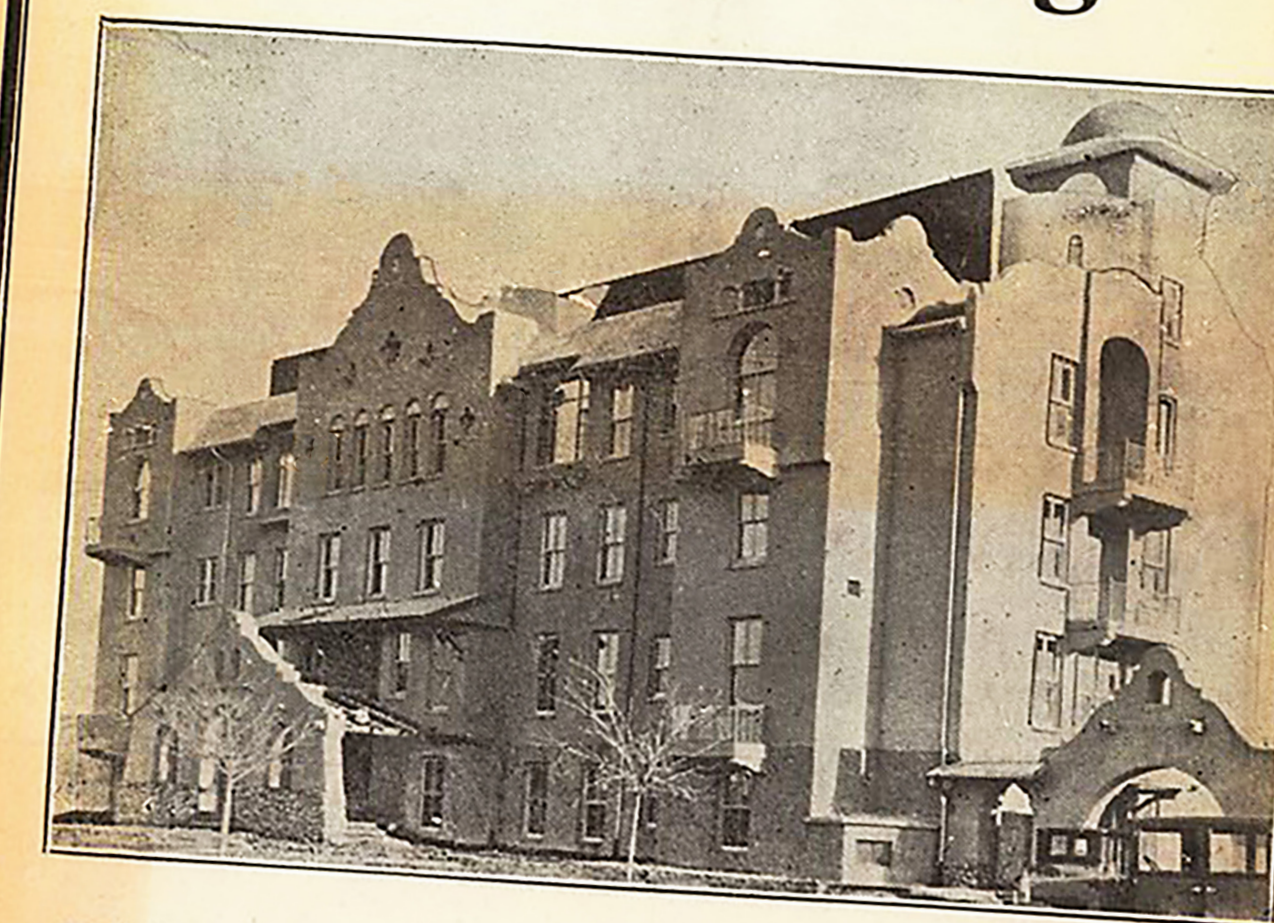
(Right) Some soon-to-be graduates relax on the steps of the Mercy Hospital Nurses Home which was adjacent to the hospital building.

Valley City Adds to War Effort with Contribution of Well-Trained Nurses

In June of 1943, the United States Congress approved the Bolton Nurse Training Act which aimed to address the nursing shortage. The Act would fund nursing schools to accelerate training, and would pay nursing students to attend. Those entering the program had to pledge to potentially serve in the military or as a civilian nurse until the end of the war. By August 1943, Mercy Hospital had already filed an application to take part in the inaugural program.

Valley City was one of 1,100 schools and hospitals nationwide who participated in this program. Cadet nurses at Mercy Hospital received a monthly stipend as well as scholarships that covered tuition and fees. Those who graduated from Mercy Hospital's School of Nursing went on to staff U.S. hospitals and care for the wounded when they came back home. Mercy would graduate a total of 58 Cadet Nurses spanning from 1944 to 1948 and did have one cadet nurse, Helen Moffatt Halle (Class of 1944), join the military as an army nurse.

Mercy Hospital AND Training School For Nursing



Sisters of Mercy
Valley City, North Dakota
FULLY EQUIPPED

Cadet Nurse Corps Memories

Excerpt from a letter sent by Ethelyn (Smedshammer) Paulson, Class of 1948 -

It's been an experience recalling what happened back in 1945-1948. Many can't be recorded on paper. The nuns were very strict with us and each nurse could write their own book about patients, etc ... I wanted to become a nurse since a teenager, and then the government offered the Cadet Corps to help ease the shortage of nurses during World War II. I applied and was accepted and, after graduating from High School on a Friday, I packed up and moved to the nurses' dorm and school began the following Monday. The government program furnished our white work uniforms and a military-style dress uniform, tuition, books, and a monthly allowance. Part of our training was in Minneapolis and Devils Lake. Earning our Caps was a ceremony and we were happy to wear it. Rules were hair could not touch our shoulders, no perfume, uniform skirt length was to be mid-calf, scissors and pen in our pocket at all times. Hours at dorm were listed and backed. If anyone was caught breaking rules, they were 'campused' which meant you could not leave hospital grounds for a specified time. There were four single beds to a room and not much storage. We also learned to be on time - or a little ahead of time - for work shift, not to talk politics or religion to patients, and to respect patient privacy.

The advice I gave my granddaughter (who entered nurses training years later and is now an R.N.) when people ask for advice from her to solve their medical problems, smile and say, "I'm not a doctor, I'm a nurse, and I take orders from the doctors." Nurses' training helps you all your life and benefits come in many forms. I'm grateful for the training, the friendships with other nurses, and will value the experience forever.

Ethelyn (Smedshammer) Paulson



(Above) Some cadets enjoyed a District Nurses Picnic that was held at Chautauqua Park.

(Right) The Graduating Cadet Class of 1947.

(Fade below) The Mercy Hospital Nurses Choir.

Want more information?

Visit the Barnes County Museum at 315 Central Ave North in Historic Downtown Valley City or scan the QR Code to connect to the Barnes County Historical Society website.

