

Nurses in Fort Collins
Clara Ray, Jane Michie, and Emma Powers



The Fort Collins Hospital was erected in 1906 at Mathews and Magnolia, and was operated until 1925, when the Larimer County Hospital was established. In the early 20th century, it was at Fort Collins Hospital that many local nurses learned their profession.

Here are a few shots, all from 1914-1915.



Jane Michie was a member of FCH's 1914 class of nurses, along with 5 classmates: Daisy Wall, Adelia Hammerly, Angie Hutt, Bessie Hadley, and Loa Carleton (McGregor). Michie worked as a nurse at the hospital for a few years before family responsibilities took her away from the profession. We have several artifacts related to Jane Michie's nurse training, as well as Jane's sister Lena, including their nursing diplomas.



By all accounts the Class of 1914 liked each other a lot, and remained in touch throughout the decades, as you can see in this undated photograph. That's Daisy in front, Jane in back.



Professional nurse Emma Powers came to Larimer County in 1873. She opened the Powers Maternity Hospital (505 East Oak Street) in 1916, and operated it for three years. After Larimer County Hospital opened, she joined its staff to take charge of the maternity ward.

Here are two shots labeled “Powers Maternity Hospital,” one undated, and one from 1927, after it served as the maternity hospital.



Clara Ray served as a pediatric nurse from 1929 to 1972 at Poudre Valley Memorial Hospital and its predecessors. In those early years at what was called the old Poor Farm, Clara stoked fires in the coal-burning stoves and cleaned rooms as well as caring for patients. In those days, the nursing “staff” was Clara and a registered nurse, and they worked and lived in the frame building, essentially on duty 24/7.

If there was an emergency night surgery, one of them assisted; when a patient was critically ill, they took turns napping and tending the patient. Clara could always be found rocking a young child to sleep, as she is here in a photograph at center from her retirement party in 1972 (the photo on the left was taken in 1958). In an oral history at the Archive at FCMoD, you can listen to an audio clip of Clara playing music she composed on the autoharp.



Learn more about local history by visiting the Archive at Fort Collins Museum of Discovery, visiting the Poudre River Public Library District, and by checking us out online at the Fort Collins History Connection.