



**Top photo:** Atlantic City, New Jersey, May 13, 1947, Miss Dock on her 90th birthday. Photo taken at the International Council of Nurses 9<sup>th</sup> Quadrennial Congress. Miss Dock was then the only living Charter Member of the Bellevue Alumnae Association (BAA) and one of the founders of ICN.

**L to R:** Mary Johnston, Bellevue student; Lavinia Lloyd Dock; Olive Eroh, BAA Treasurer; Margaret Wening, BAA President; Rose Marie Gudgeon, Bellevue student. (Photo courtesy Foundation of NYS Nurses, Bellevue Alumnae Center for Nursing History, Bellevue School of Nursing Alumnae Association Collection.)

**Bottom photo:** Lavinia Lloyd Dock (right) and Miss. Fay, 1893, Chicago. (Photo courtesy Special Collections, Milbank Memorial Library, TC)

## Autobiographical Sketch:

### Lavinia L. Dock

*The following Autobiographical Sketch by Lavinia L. Dock is printed courtesy of Foundation of NYS Nurses, Bellevue Alumnae Center for Nursing History, Bellevue School of Nursing Alumnae Association Collection. The autobiographical sketch, which was written in the 1930s, is presented in its original, unedited form.*

It seems as if an intimation from the “unconscious” had given my life its direction, for, though at the age of about twenty I had never seen a hospital nor spoken even the word, yet in idle talk one day as someone said to me “What would you do if had to earn a living?” I replied instantly “I would go into a hospital.”

I then forgot this but several years later the idea recurred to me and I told a friend, with the question “What would be a good hospital to go to?” She replied at once “Bellevue.” Again I thought no more of this until I read the article in Scribner’s which did so much to excite interest – it was illustrated by the charming sketch of Isabel Hampton pouring a dose of medicine. This decided me and I sent my application.

I was singularly devoid of any knowledge of the world – almost, I might say a dunce. Bellevue overpowered me with a sense of awe, and to this day I can recapture the impression of mystery, gloom, and romance by recalling the dark walls and gate, and romance, with moonlight on it, the whistle of the boat sirens and the clang of the ambulance bells. The internes seemed to me beings from another world and I was afraid of the ward helpers who were prisoners from the Island. There were many eminently interesting and able women in the school and my course there was uninterruptedly happy. One of my classmates who was a Churchwoman used to take me to early service at the sisterhood of St. John Baptist, and with Louise Darche and Diana Kimber, who loved music, I went as often as possible to the opera. I was one of the fortunate ones who never felt tired – whose feet never hurt, and who could eat anything.

I think I liked change and novelty for after finishing my two years I tried several things. My roommate, Alice Green and I offered our services to Dr. Huntington of Grace Church, as visiting nurses, and made there a small beginning. But what he really wanted was an Order of Deaconesses (was established) and we were not there very long. Nilhelmina Weir who had been one of my headnurses, came to ask me to go with her to Florida, where a

yellow-fever camp had been built up on the sand hills outside of Jacksonville. I went off with her and Alice Green later married Dr. Hutchinson (or Dr. Hutcheson – please look up name).

At the sand hills Miss Delano was in charge and Dr. Mitchell, a Bellevue man, was Medical Director. The nursing was well organized and the epidemic was not as severe as many others.

After that episode ended I was appointed Night Superintendent at Bellevue for a year or more and while there I wrote the little *Materia Medica*, and also was given a short time off to go to the relief work of the Johnstown flood disaster. I was enabled to be the first nurse on the ground though Clara Barton was there first of all with supplies for relief. When a force of physicians and nurses came from Philadelphia I returned to Bellevue.

While there on the night duty I met for the first time Isabel Hampton. Greatly surprised and pleased was I later, when she wrote to me from the Johns Hopkins asking me to be her assistant there.

Some there were who thought I must have been able to secure a great “pull” but it was really just as simple as I have said.

Life at Johns Hopkins with Miss Hampton was very pleasant. As I look back it seems just one long Summer day. She was good and wholesome to live with, a beautiful woman of charm and dignity. Her bearing and countenance were serene yet she had an intensity of eagerness for her interests, and this emotion flashed in her eyes and sent up her color. Nursing in all its aspects was her passionate concentration – how to perfect it, how to elevate its standing, how to widen and advance its field. She used to smile at her own absorption, and told how, being one day on the street car and seeing a person running after the car she called to the conductor “Stop the car; there is a patient trying to get on.” She was innately feminist and believed that women’s place and power in regard to human life and health should be superior to that of men.

When her friend and Bellevue classmate, Edith Draper, resigned from the Illinois Training School at the Cook County Hospital I went out there. It was the year after the World’s Fair, and for the great gatherings there Miss Hampton had drawn up a set of papers to be written by eminent nurses, and in these our network of local and national organizations was planned and begun.

I was not very successful in Chicago. It was too big for me and needed someone who had grown up with it, like Miss McIsaac who followed me there. ♦

I went back to New York, where my old friend Miss Weir told me of some nurses who were living on the East Side, from which so many of the Bellevue patients had come. This was the Nurse Settlement, and was the last of my wanderings for as one of the nursing staff at first, and later as I grew too old to climb the stairs, a resident with freedom to come and go. I was there until my retirement in 1915.

During that time I was at liberty to carry on a good deal of secretary work with our national Society of Superintendents, and with the International Council of Nurses which had been planned for in the discussions at the Chicago Fair by Mrs. Bedford Fenwick, Miss Hampton and our new local groups. We had a first meeting in London England, then one in Buffalo; another in Germany; the next in Paris, and again, in 1912, in England.

I was fortunate in being able to attend all of these, but the war broke out before our next date; and I never got to go to another. It was during this coming and going that Miss Nutting and I wrote up our History. And I also wrote a small book on Prostitution called Hygiene and Morality.

Life at the Henry Street Settlement was, without a doubt, the greatest privilege of my life though I had had, as you see, much that was of special interest. The personality and attracting power of Miss Wald created a center where one was conscious of new meanings in life, and where world interests provided a liberal education. It is my conviction that I never really knew anything until I lived there, and among all the fine and unusual women I had known – Miss Wald seemed to me most nearly to resemble the sun, with its life giving powers, and its unwearied shining. I am far from pleased with my own work there, when I compare it with the record of the Henry Street Nurses now.

It was after I left there and gone home that I joined the National Women's Party and went to jail. There was something satisfactory in doing that.

It has been a trait of my nature to be pleased with myself as I went along, and greatly dissatisfied with my self on looking back; therefore there is little in my career that I can think now very well of. Not long ago I wrote to a friend, "If I ever meet St. Peter at the Gate there will be a conversation something like this:

Peter: 'Well, what is your record?'

Me: 'Well, there are only two things I am really satisfied with.'

Peter: 'Well, what are they?'

Me: 'Well, doing the History with Miss Nutting and going to jail with the Women's Party.'"

## Lavinia L. Dock Collector's Pin Available

Lavinia Dock, 1886 graduate of Bellevue Hospital's training school for nurses and charter member of NYSNA, was one of nursing's most Influential leaders. As author of the first definitive history of nursing and hundreds of columns, Dock was a catalyst for improved understanding and communications within the global nursing community. A believer in the power of collective action, she was a founder of the first state, national and international nursing organizations, and an advocate of legislation to regulate nursing. Her energies turned to the suffrage movement when she realized many of nursing's problems were part of the broader issue of women's rights. At Teachers College, Dock volunteered to teach a postgraduate course in hospital economics for nurses. Author, musician, artist, visiting nurse and social activist, Dock accepted individual responsibility to act—often unconventionally, but always with devotion and style.

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