Appalachian
STATE UNIVERSITY®
BOONE, NORTH CAROLINA

Nursing History Council Recaps
The First NCNA Convention

By: **Phoebe Pollitt, RN, PhD**

Abstract

This is a brief recap of nurse Mary Lewis Wyche's efforts to create and establish a statewide nursing organization in North Carolina.

Nursing History Council Recaps the First NCNA Convention

By NCNA Member **Phoebe Pollitt, RN, PhD**

In the summer of 1902, nurse Mary Lewis Wyche, a Vance County native, graduate of the Pennsylvania Hospital School of Nursing, and first Matron at the Rex Hospital in Raleigh, knew there was a need for a statewide nursing organization in North Carolina. She sent postcards to all of the white nurses in Raleigh inviting them to a founding meeting of the Raleigh Nurses Association (RNA). No one came. Undaunted, she sent a second postcard to the same nurses, inviting them to an important meeting of the newly formed RNA, and every white nurse in Raleigh attended.

Soon the RNA started organizing a statewide meeting, which was held October 28-29, 1902, in Raleigh during the week of the state fair, when railroads offered reduced rates to travel to Raleigh. Twenty-eight nurses from across the state attended and incorporated themselves in the NC State Nurses Association (NCSNA). Their highest priority was to get a Nurse Practice Act passed by the state legislature.

With no political clout, nor even the right to vote, this group of determined women was successful, and on March 3, 1903, NC became the first state in the United States to pass a Nurse Practice Act. Unfortunately, the NCSNA was a segregated organization until 1949, when it became one of the first NC professional organizations to racially integrate its ranks.