

AAHN BULLETIN



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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Welcome you to the Spring 2026 issue of the AAHN Bulletin. As highlighted in this issue, we are looking forward to our upcoming joint conference with the American Association for the History of Medicine, to be held June 3–7, 2026, in Buffalo, New York. This meeting is an exciting opportunity to share research, reconnect with colleagues, and engage with historians across disciplines. I hope you will join us for what promises to be a stimulating and rewarding conference experience.

I extend my sincere thanks to everyone who took the time to complete the AAHN Strategic Planning Survey. Your engagement ensures that AAHN continues to evolve in ways that reflect the needs and aspirations of our diverse community. The Board is using your feedback to finalize a new strategic plan, which we look forward to sharing with the membership later this year.

This issue of the Bulletin showcases the breadth of activity within AAHN. I encourage you to explore the full issue and to stay involved in the many initiatives and events that sustain our shared commitment to nursing history.

If you have questions, ideas, or concerns. I welcome hearing from you and can be reached at gwyneth@uic.edu. I look forward to connecting with many of you in the months ahead and hope to see you in Buffalo this June.

Gwyneth Franck, PhD, RN, MPH



AAHN 43rd Annual Conference

in conjunction with the
American Association for the History of
Medicine 99th Annual Meeting



June 3-7, 2026
Buffalo, NY

Join us for the AAHM and AAHM Joint Conference, taking place June 3-7, 2026 In Buffalo, NY. Registration is now open! Register for the conference via the [AAHM site](#).

The **Pre-Conference Workshop**, "Teaching Healthcare History Through Visual and Experiential Learning," will take place Thursday June 4 from 2:00 - 4:00 pm. Emily Anne Barry, PhD, RN, Donna Miles Curry, PhD, RN, and Ruth Manchester, MA, RN, will discuss selected teaching strategies using visual and narrative environments to teach healthcare history. Exemplars will include film, museums, and public art with application activities. Register for the pre-conference at the [AAHN site](#).

The **Eleanor Herrman Memorial Lecture** will be delivered by Molly Ladd-Taylor, PhD, Professor of History at York University. Dr. Ladd-Taylor will present "Nurses, Mothers & Others: Baby-Saving and its Legacy in American History." It will take place Friday June 5 from 11:15 am - 11:21:15 pm.

View the AAHN Thursday/Friday Preliminary Program on the [AAHN site](#). And view the rest of the program on the [AAHM site](#).

April Matthias, PhD RN, CNE

Niagara Falls Excursion (optional add-on): While you're in nearby Buffalo, take the opportunity to visit Niagara Falls! A chartered bus will depart from the conference hotel (Hyatt) at 1:00 pm on Sunday June 7, for a self-guided, two-hour visit to the Falls. The bus will return to the Hyatt between 4:00 and 5:00pm.

Kassie Stoffer, MSN, FNP-C

Conference Hotel: The annual meeting will be held at the Hyatt Regency Buffalo located at 2 Fountain Plaza, Buffalo, NY 14202. Cut-off date for the AAHM + AAHN conference room rate in May 6, 2026. You can book your room at the group rate by clicking [here](#) or by calling (716) 856-1234.

Inadvertent Martyrs: Alex Pretti and Edith Cavell

By Arlene W. Keeling, PhD, RN, FAAN

Alex Pretti, the Veterans Administration ICU nurse who was executed by agents of the U.S. government on January 24, 2026, was not the first nurse to die while participating in a resistance movement. Neither was he the first to be slandered with propaganda and in the end made an inadvertent martyr. Edith Cavell, one of the most famous British nurses of World War I, suffered the same fate, albeit under different circumstances. Both died because they adhered to their ethical and moral commitments to protect the weak and vulnerable.

Brandishing only a cellphone to document what was happening on the streets of Minneapolis, Minnesota in early January 2026, Alex stepped in to protect a woman being assaulted and pepper sprayed by masked Immigration and Custom Enforcement (ICE) agents of the U.S. government. "Don't touch her!" he reportedly yelled at an ICE agent, before asking the woman if she was ok and shielding her with his body. According to news reports, Alex hadn't intended to participate in the resistance march occurring in Minneapolis that day. He just happened by and could not let what he saw happening go on without doing something: it was in his DNA to help. For that he was shot ten times and murdered in cold blood – in the street, without a trial.

Because of his spontaneity and his immediate cruel execution, Alex Pretti's story is different from Edith Cavell's. For months, Edith had been working with a large network of resistance fighters, intentionally assisting injured Allied soldiers to escape to freedom by smuggling them out of her "Clinique" in occupied Belgium to neutral Holland. Committed to continuing her resistance work even after the clinic was invaded and several of her colleagues interrogated by the enemy, Cavell refused to stop. On August 5, 1915, German authorities entered the clinic and arrested her. While Edith awaited trial in Saint Gilles prison in Brussels, she was presented with three depositions that accused her of working with the resistance. She signed those papers, despite the fact that she most likely did not understand what was actually written on them: she did not read German and the content was only verbally translated into French. During her trial, Edith testified in her defense, stating: "My preoccupation has not been to aid the enemy but to help the men who applied to me to reach the frontier; once across the frontier, they were free." (1) In short, she was trying to help her injured patients escape captivity. Found guilty of spying, Edith Cavell was executed by a German firing squad on the morning of October 12, 1915. (2)

Despite the difference in the length and type of their resistance work, Alex's and Edith's stories share some similarities. Both nurses were subjected to slander after their executions – Edith from the German authorities who accused her of being a spy; Alex from the U.S. Secretary of Homeland Security who labelled him a “domestic terrorist... wishing to inflict harm on the officers.” (3) Moreover, after their deaths, both nurses became martyrs. Edith was martyred for her activity during the war. What was forgotten, according to historian Christine Hallet, was her long career in developing nursing education in Belgium and her devotion to professional practice. In short, her martyrdom was “the hijacking of individual accomplishment to serve a nationalist mythology.”(4) The same could be said about Alex: his caring intervention on the street of Minneapolis resulted in his martyrdom; his previous career fading into the background.

But Alex was more than his last caring intervention. And he was by no means a domestic terrorist. His career in the Veterans Administration ICU where he not only cared for critically ill patients but also mentored numerous nursing students should not be forgotten. As one of his students said: “for the past four months, I stood shoulder to shoulder with him during my capstone preceptorship at the Minneapolis VA Hospital. There he trained me to care for the sickest of the sick as an ICU nurse.” Another of Alex's mentees agreed, noting that from him she learned to manage arterial and central lines, handle complex IV infusions of lifesaving medications, and “vigilantly monitor every vital sign, ready to respond with precision and care.” (5) He also taught them the art of caring. It is what ICU nurses all over the world do every day; it is what Alex had no doubt been doing for years.

In his final salute to a U.S. veteran who died in his ICU in 2024, Alex said: “In this solemn hour, we render him our “honor and gratitude.” Today, we can say the same, giving Alex our honor and gratitude, not only for his final heroic deed, but for all of the care he provided to patients in the past years. Indeed, he deserves the same honor and respect that was given to Edith Cavell in the United Kingdom; the same honor and respect that he gave to veterans who served to protect the United States of America. (6)

References

- [1] Rowland Ryder, *Edith Cavell*, (London UK: Hamish Hamilton, 1975): 199.
- [2] Christine Hallet, *Veiled Warriors: Allied Nurses of the First World War*. (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2014): 15.
- [3] N.A. “The Hill,” <https://www.thehill.com/homenews/senate/5709357-kristi-noem-criticism-minneapolis-shooting/> (Accessed January 28, 2026).
See also: Christine Hallet, *Veiled Warriors*, (2014): 15.
- [4] Christine Hallet, *Veiled Warriors*,” (2014): 15.
- [5] Daniel D., “Facebook.” January 26, 2026.
- [6] Linda Hersey, “VA Critical Care Nurse shot by Federal Agents is Remembered for Compassionate Care,” *Stars and Stripes*. [www.https://www.stripes.com](https://www.stripes.com).

Announcements & Member News

News from the History Centers

The **Barbara Bates Center for the Study of the History of Nursing** announces the opening of a new ***Nursing the Revolution*** exhibit. Part of Penn's America 250 programming, this exhibit explores the critical yet often overlooked essential role of nurses during the American Revolution whose vital work helped shape early American healthcare. It challenges the widespread belief that nursing began in the 19th century. Discover rare evidence of caregiving that shaped early American healthcare long before it was formally recognized. [Read more about the exhibit](#)

This year, the Barbara Bates Center **celebrates its 40th anniversary**, marking four decades of preserving and advancing the history of nursing and healthcare. [Read more](#)

The **American Association of Critical-Care Nurses** has made a substantial deposit of historical materials to the Barbara Bates Center. The comprehensive collection, with continued ownership by the association, includes physical and digital documents, correspondence, audiovisual assets and other materials that chronicle the evolution of critical care nursing. [Read the full announcement](#)

The **Bjoring Center for Nursing Historical Inquiry** announces the launch of a new online archival resource celebrating the 125th anniversary of the University of Virginia School of Nursing. It brings together primary sources, historical photographs, and contextual information about the school's history and its contributions to the nursing profession. To find out more, visit the [website](#).

The recipient of the Bjoring Center's **2026 Agnes Randolph Dillon Award** is Kylie Smith, PhD, in recognition of her outstanding scholarship on the history of nursing, psychiatry, and health equity.

The **Midwest Nursing History Research Center** announces the launch of a new curricular resource, Teaching Care: Black Nursing History and Health Equity. The program provides ready-to-use lesson plans, primary sources, and teaching guides that integrate nursing history into nursing and health sciences education. Each nursing lesson is mapped to several AACN Essentials and addresses topics such as structural racism in healthcare, social determinants of health, nursing advocacy, and workplace equity. For more information, visit the [Mapping Care website](#).

Announcements & Member News

Museums & Exhibits

Museum Exhibit Centers South Asian Nurses: AAHN member Lydia Wytenbroek, PhD, RN was the curator for a museum exhibit called, *Journeys in Care: Stories from Nurses of Indian Heritage*. The exhibit which centers the voices of 19 South Asian nurses. It explores these themes: Coming to Canada, Becoming a Nurse, Nursing Education, Firsts and Challenges, & Inspiring the Next Generation. It includes two filmed interviews and 3 audio kiosks in which 5 nurses share their stories in their own words.

Surrey Museum in British Columbia has the only program in Canada where community members can apply to create a museum exhibit. Lydia worked with the museum curators and colleagues to create this exhibit which will be on display until July 19, 2026.



The **Museum of Nursing History**, located in Philadelphia, PA, is celebrating its 50th anniversary this summer in concert with the celebration of the semi-quincentennial, our country's 250th anniversary. They welcome nurses visiting from many states to share their extensive collection of nursing memorabilia, including nursing school pins, capes, caps, uniforms and many items used to provide nursing care from our rich history. Please visit the website for more information about the museum ([Museum of Nursing History](#)).

Linda Ruholl, PhD, RN, is nurse historian at **Effingham County Museum**, located in south-central Illinois. She collects, preserves, interprets, presents, and publishes local health care and women's history. A recent initiative is *The Effingham Historian*, a 32-page quarterly journal, now in its second year. Contact Dr. Ruholl at lruholl46@gmail.com to receive a copy of the latest issue.

Announcements & Member News

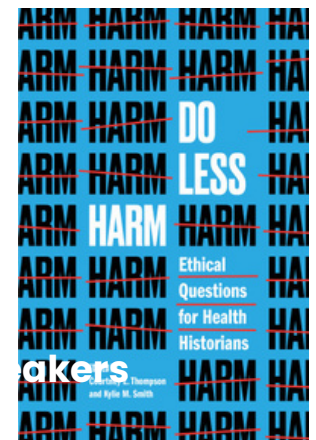
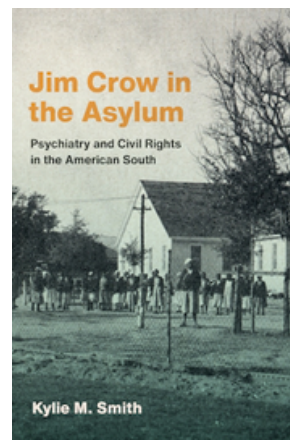
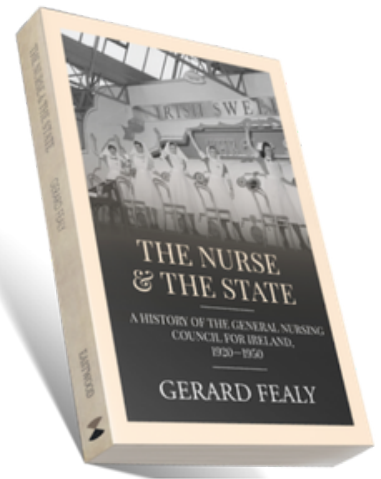
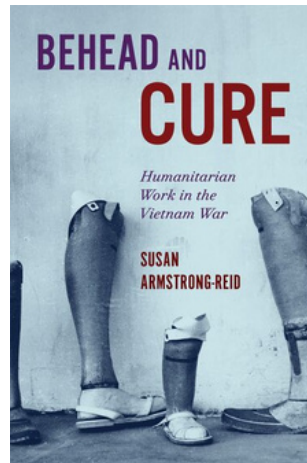
New Publications

Congratulations to our AAHN members who recently published new books:

- **Susan Armstrong-Reid**, *Behead and Cure: Humanitarian Work in the Vietnam War* (Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, 2025)
- **Gerard Fealy**, *The Nurse and the State: A History of the General Nursing Council for Ireland, 1920–1950* (Dublin: Eastwood Books an imprint of Wordwell Books, 2025)
- **Kylie Smith**, *Jim Crow in the Asylum: Psychiatry and Civil Rights in the American South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2026).
- Courtney Thompson & **Kylie Smith** (eds.) *Do Less Harm: Ethical Questions for Health Historians* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2025).

Recent articles from our AAHN members include:

- Roberto Galao-Malo, Rita D'Aoust, Alison Davidson, **Kim Curry**, "The Historical Foundations of Advanced Practice Nursing: Tracing American Origins for Global Understanding." *Journal of Advanced Nursing* (2025) 1–11. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jan.70279>



- **Olivia Lemberger**, Jeanette Rossetti, Siobhán Smyth, "Exploring How Nurse Innovators Define and Measure Impact: A Qualitative Study." *International Nursing Review* (2026) 73(1): e70170.

Announcements & Member News

***Nursing History Review* invites applications for Assistant Editor**

Nursing History Review, is the pre-eminent academic nursing history journal in the world and an important element of your AAHN membership. We are currently looking for a new assistant editor to join our team. As the assistant editor you will support the associate editor, Dr Erin Spinney and the editor, Dr Jane Brooks, with the editorial work of the journal, appointing reviewers and engaging with the decision-making processes for the annual volume. To be eligible, applicants must have published on the history of nursing and/or health in a peer-reviewed journal.

If you are interested in joining the NHR editorial team, please contact Dr Brooks on jane.brooks@manchester.ac.uk. I look forward to hearing from you.

Call for Papers

The **Health and Social Issues in History: Interdisciplinary Perspectives** international conference will take place October 15-16, 2026 in South Bohemia, Czech Republic. It is organized by several major Czech institutions: the University of South Bohemia in České Budějovice, the Prague University of Economics and Business, the University of West Bohemia in Pilsen, the National Archives of the Czech Republic, and the Czech Academy of Sciences.

We warmly welcome submissions of paper abstracts. Our aim is to bring together scholars and help build a broad network of researchers working on a broad range of topics related to health and social issues from historical perspectives. The history of nursing represents one of the key thematic pillars of the conference.

Submissions are due by May 30, 2026. For guidelines for participants and registration, visit www.zsf.jcu.cz

Announcements & Member News

Member News

Donna Curry recommends Wil Haygood's new book, *The War Within a War: The Black Struggle in Vietnam and at Home* (Knopf, 2026). It includes the story of Dorothy Harris, a Black nurse from Cincinnati, who graduated from Jewish Hospital School of Nursing on an Army scholarship and in 1966, Harris volunteered to go to Vietnam. Haygood shares not just Dorothy's story but also the challenges Black women and men faced in their efforts to become military nurses. You can also find Harris's story as part of the Ohio History and the [Ohio Veterans Oral History Project](#).

Arlene Keeling received the Mary Ann Garrigan Award from Nursing Archives Associates, Howard Gotlieb Archival Research Center at Boston University in the fall of 2025.

The **Dr. Margaret A. Newman Center for Nursing Theory** (Newman Center) is a resource hub for nursing theory education located at The University Health Science Center, College of Nursing in Memphis, Tennessee. It offers both physical and virtual space with easy access to nursing theory resources, with a particular emphasis on Dr. Newman's theory of Health as Expanding

Consciousness (HEC). Established in memory of Dr. Newman, the Newman Center supports the ongoing development, use, and growth of nursing theory, including continued advancement of HEC. It officially opened on May 30, 2023. It is directed by AAHN member, **Marie Gill** and is supported through collaboration with a health sciences archivist who manages Dr. Newman's archival collection.

Several features distinguish the Newman Center from other nursing theory organizations. The center is guided by an advisory board of nursing theory experts. It sponsors a scholarly HEC dialogue and a Distinguished Visiting Professorship (DVP) featuring lectures grounded in HEC. It also houses a museum-style Nursing Theory Dialogue Room, designed for dialogue and reflection and featuring historical artifacts related to Dr. Newman's professional work. Of specific note, the Newman Center archive—approximately 15 cubic feet—is housed in the university health science library. The collection includes published and unpublished papers, Dr. Newman's dissertation, research and grant materials, photographs, artwork, correspondence, presentation recordings, a personal library of approximately 400 books, Nursing Theory Think Tanks (1978–1988) original documents, and related materials.

Upcoming AAHN Events

Webinars

Teaching Nursing History Webinar

“Teaching Care: Addressing Core Nursing Competencies through Engaging Students with Ready-Made Black Nursing History Lessons.” Presented by Gwyneth Franck, PhD, RN, MPH

During this webinar, you will explore the Teaching Care curriculum, a series of eight lesson plans mapped to the AACN Essentials that use the history of Black Nurses to teach core nursing competencies and associated sub-competency progression indicators. You will receive an overview of each lesson with guidance on how to adapt the lessons for integration into pre-existing undergraduate and graduate nursing courses. You will also engage in a sample activity together to experience the value of using history as a learning resource and tool.

Register on the [AAHN website](#).

Speakers

Networking Events

Retired Members: Third Friday of the month

All Members: Fourth Friday of the month

For more information, visit www.aahn.org