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# The History of Nursing in Denmark

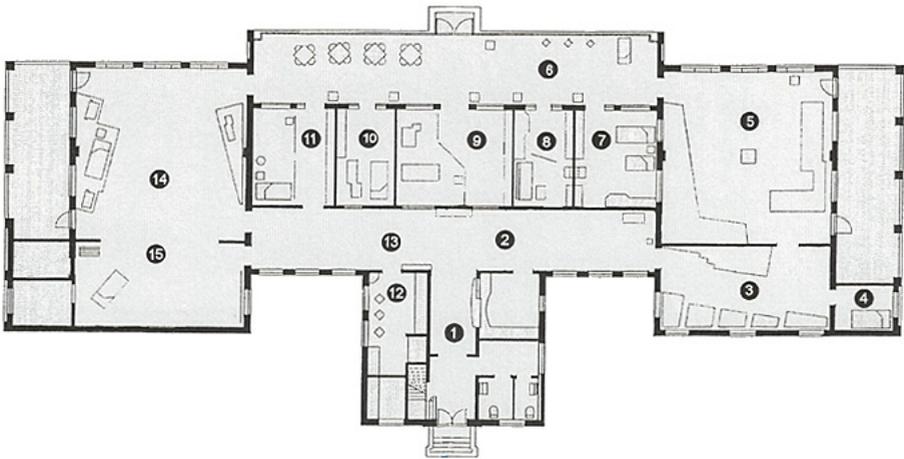
Timeline

By Susanne Malchau Dietz

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**Danish  
Museum of  
Nursing History**





## Museum Floor Plan

1. Hall – reception / museum shop
2. Hospital ward in the 1930s – ward round just started
3. “The Dark Period of Nursing” – pre-professional nursing
4. Copenhagen Municipal Hospital (Københavns Kommunehospital) – a hospital bed c. 1880
5. Professional nursing – the new nurse 1899 to present time (Danish Nurses’ Organization – international co-operation – public health - nursing disciplines – nurses in war– nurses abroad – nursing badges)
6. Museum Café and Tuberculosis
7. Hospital sick room in the 1930s
8. The nurses private room in the 1930s
9. Hospital admittance, examination and OR in the 1950s
10. Koldingfjord Christmas Seal Sanatorium 1911. The museum buildings are situated in the two pavilions of the former TB-sanatorium where the smallest infants were admitted
11. Home Nursing, School Nursing and Public Health Nursing
12. Ward cleaning room
13. Different exhibitions on special topics
14. Clinical and theoretical education 1899 to present time / different exhibitions
15. A class room from a school of nursing in the 1940s / different exhibitions

# The Curve of Nursing History



The curve of the nursing history shows the types of nurses at different periods and initiation of important movements (Dock and Stewart 1920).

Professor in nursing Adelaide Nutting (1858-1948) Teachers College NY introduced the concept of “the Dark Period in Nursing” in her 3-volume textbook A History of Nursing published 1907-1912 (translated into German).

## Timeline of Nursing History in Denmark

- 1440 Collegium Medicum (advising the state and King on national issues concerning health and sickness), followed 1803 by Sundhedskollegiet, followed 1909 by Sundhedsstyrelsen [The Danish National Board of Health].
- 1479 University of Copenhagen founded including a Faculty of Medicine - educating doctores medicinæ
- 1662 A royal decree authorized doctores medicinæ to treat internal diseases. Barber-Surgeons performed surgery.
- 1769 The General Hospital [Almindelig Hospital], Copenhagen, was founded - the first public hospital of the country - an institution for the poor (closed 1892).
- 1757 The Royal Frederic’s Hospital [Det kongelige Frederiks Hospital], Copenhagen. Public hospital established to treat and care for impoverished and curable patients in Copenhagen for free. In 1910 the hospital was handed over to the state and moved to its current location in Copenhagen. It also changed its name to Rigshospitalet [the State Hospital] and was open to all citizens of the Danish Realm.
- 1785 The Royal Surgical Academy [Kgl. Kirurgisk Akademi], Copenhagen, was founded. Purpose: education of the surgeons separated from the Barber-Surgeon guilds 1736.
- 1788 Surgeons were authorized to treat both medical and surgical diseases

- 1842 Physicians' and surgeons' education unified at the University of Copenhagen
- 1850 (Circa) Nursing at the hospitals by uneducated women from the lower class (described in the history as Sarey Gamp types)
- 1853 Cholera epidemic in Denmark. Ilia Fibiger (1817-1868), a young authoress volunteered as an (uneducated) nurse at Copenhagen General Hospital. Later she became a staff nurse at the Royal Frederic's Hospital. She retired as she found the job physically exhausting. She was the first reported young woman in nursing from the well-to-do classes.
- 1856 The nursing congregation The Sisters of Saint Joseph of Chambéry from Savoy established a mission in Denmark. Among the first four sisters there were two professionally trained nurses. They were the first trained nurses' in Denmark.
- 1863 The Danish Deaconess Foundation [Diakonissestiftelsen] in Copenhagen was founded after the German Kaiserswerth model. The first superintendent Miss Louise Conring (1824-1891) was educated in German deaconess homes and consecrated by pastor Fliedner 1863. The deaconesses introduced the first training program in nursing in Denmark. In 1900 Saint Luke's Foundation (Sankt Lukas Stiftelsen) was founded. The two deaconess homes made an important contribution in building up the nursing profession. They owned two hospitals and staffed numerous public hospitals introducing professional nursing. They opened two schools of nursing in Denmark. Only one has survived. The deaconesses recruited women from the lower middle-class.
- 1863 Copenhagen Municipal Hospital [Københavns Kommunehospital] opened with 800 beds. The cholera epidemic 1853 proved that the hospital system of Copenhagen was insufficient and consequently this particular hospital was opened.
- 1868 The General Hospital in Copenhagen advertised for women from the middle-class to be trained in nursing by initiative of Ludvig Israel Brandes, MD (1821-1894).
- 1875-1920 the public hospital system expanded all over the country and the need for educated nursing staff increased.
- 1875 Saint Josephs Hospital [Sankt Josephs Hospital] - the first Roman Catholic hospital of the country opened in Copenhagen. From 1926-77 the hospital had a nursing school. During the period 1875-1931, Catholic nursing-congregations opened 17 private hospitals in Denmark, and 1910-40 they supplied 10 % of the hospital beds of the country. They were all closed down as the Danish welfare system took over building up its own hospitals, and because of an increased lack of nursing sisters due to the vocations crisis. The last Catholic hospital closed in 1994.
- 1876 Copenhagen Municipal Hospital introduced the first secular nursing education in the country. They recruited women from the middle-class.
- 1899 The Danish Nurses' Organization [Dansk Sygeplejeråd] was founded with the aim to improve the nursing education to a 3-year program and to advocate for state authorization. The first president Charlotte Norrie (1855-1940) was soon followed by Henny Tscherning (1853-1932), who was trained in 1883 at The Nightingale Training School, London. By that the Nightingale-system became dominant in Denmark.
- 1899 International Council of Nurses (ICN) was founded. Danish Charlotte Norrie was co-founder of the ICN. She did not manage to convince the Danish Nurses' Organ-

ization to become a member. The issue caused her to lose her position as president.

- 1901 The Danish Nursing Journal [Tidsskrift for Sygeplejersker] was published by The Danish Nurses' Organization (is still published).
- 1909 The Danish Nurses' Organization obtained membership of ICN.
- 1913 Bispebjerg Hospital in Copenhagen opened with the first nursing school in the country. Matron Charlotte Munck (1876-1932) trained (and graduated 1909) at The Presbyterian Hospital in New York led by Anna Maxwell (1859-1929). Charlotte Munck was president of the Danish Nurses' Organization 1927-1932.
- 1915 The First Danish President of ICN, Henny Tscherning was elected
- 1918 Christiane Reimann (1888-1979) was the first Danish nurse to study at Teachers College, NY, and the first Danish nurse to obtain an academic degree (1921 BA and 1925 MA). She was also the first full-time Executive Secretary of the ICN 1922-1933. By her death she donated the Christiane Reimann Prize to be awarded at the ICN congresses – also called “the Nobel prize in nursing.” The first to be awarded was Virginia Henderson in 1985.
- 1920 The Nordic Nurses' Federation [Sygeplejerskernes Samarbejde i Norden] was founded. The member countries were: Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Finland, and Iceland. Danish Charlotte Munck was elected first president of the Federation.
- 1926 Textbooks in Nursing (3 volumes) were published by the Danish Nurses' Organization (the first textbooks in nursing edited by nurses).
- 1927 Preliminary nursing high school [Testrup Sygeplejehøjskole] – was opened by initiative of the Danish Nurses' Organization. The purpose of the School was to qualify potential nursing students to the 3-year training programme at a hospital. In total 10 preliminary nursing high schools were opened in the years to come. The last one closed in 1981.
- 1931 115 hospitals were offering 1-3 years nursing training programs
- 1933 State authorization of nurses by law – stating a 3-year training program to be a precondition to be authorized as a nurse. The nursing profession was by this an important means to the fact that the acts of the Danish welfare state also passed in 1933. (The Danish welfare state is characterized by universality – all citizens in Denmark have the right to free medical care, free hospital care, free education and a pension independent of savings and employment).
- 1938 The School of Advanced Nursing Education at the University of Aarhus [Danmarks Sygeplejerske-højskole ved Aarhus Universitet]. The School was affiliated to the University of Aarhus, but the educational programs were not recognized as university studies and did not qualify for academic degrees. There were three educational programmes: Public Health Nurse, Teaching and Leadership. Three nurses were appointed directors of studies: Ellen Broe (1900-1994), Elisabeth Larsen (1900-1975) and Ellen Margrethe Schröder (1903-1976). To prepare them for the positions they were all educated at Teachers College NY in 1936/37 by funding of the Rockefeller Foundation.
- 1939 The Danish National Board of Health formulated guidelines for the nursing curriculum (3-year programme), which till then had been given at random at the individual hospitals.

- 1946 The Danish Nurses' Organization argued for an improvement of the nursing curriculum aiming to uniform the education nationally - and they also suggested to increase the theoretical education and improve the teaching in clinical nursing practise.
- 1950 110 hospitals were offering a 3-year nursing training programme
- 1954 The Department of the Interior issued a report recommending a reform in the nursing curriculum
- 1956 New textbooks in Nursing (31 volumes) were published by the Danish Nurses' Organization
- 1956 The first law on nursing was passed by the Danish Parliament. It constituted a significant reform of the nursing curriculum, and with it 34 nursing schools were established (including 1 in the Faro Islands) in 1958. The purpose was to secure educational uniformity and to increase education in theory and clinical practice in all nursing disciplines.
- 1979 The nursing curriculum (education) was adjusted with special reference to the theoretical and practical education by inspiration of Virginia Henderson's nursing theory.
- 1990 The Department of the Interior passed a new act on nurses' education which reformed nursing education from the training of apprentices to a study programme – however not part of academia yet. The number of schools of nursing (in Denmark) was reduced to 22.
- 1991 A Master program in Nursing was introduced at the School of Advanced Nursing Education at the University of Aarhus (uptake of students: 30 students yearly)
- 1991 A PhD-program in Nursing was introduced at the University of Aarhus
- 1993 Dr. Anne-Lise Salling Larsen was appointed the first professor in clinical nursing at the University of Southern Denmark.
- 1997 The Danish Society of Nursing History [Dansk Sygeplejehistorisk Selskab] was founded. Susanne Malchau Dietz was elected the first president. The society publishes the journal Nursing & History [Sygepleje & Historie].
- 1998 Kirsten Stallknecht was elected president of ICN. She was President of the Danish Nurses' Organization 1968-96
- 1999 The Danish Museum of Nursing History [Dansk Sygeplejehistorisk Museum] was founded on the initiative by Kirsten Stallknecht.
- 2001 Department of Nursing Science, Aarhus University was founded.
- 2002 A Bachelor program in Nursing became the result of an educational reform. In 2008 the BA programme became part of the Danish University College system, which was established this year.
- 2003 The School of Advanced Nursing Education at the University of Aarhus closed.
- 2003 24 schools of nursing (incl. 1 in Greenland, 1 in the Faro Islands). Uptake: 3,000 students / year
- 2009: Nurses in number and educational level in Denmark:

- State authorized nurses (workforce): c. 63,000
- Nurses with master degrees (all disciplines): c. 1,000
- Nurses with PhD degrees (all disciplines): 85
- Nurses in PhD studies (all disciplines): 47.

2013 A Master in Clinical Nursing at the University of Southern Denmark was founded.

2013 Kirsten Stallknecht was awarded the Christiane Reimann Prize at the ICN Congress in Melbourne.

2014: Nurses in number and educational level in Denmark:

- State authorized nurses (workforce): c. 65,000
- Nurses with master degrees (all disciplines): > c. 1,000
- Nurses with PhD degrees (all disciplines): 154
- Nurses in PhD studies (all disciplines): 55.

## **Danish Nursing History - literature in English**

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*Nursing History in Denmark* (2012). Foreword by president Grete Christensen the Danish Nurses' Organization. (pamphlet)

Stallknecht, Kirsten (2012). *Nursing and Politics in Denmark. The Impact of Conflicts in a Historical Perspective*. Copenhagen: The Danish Nurses' Organization

Wingender, Nete Balslew (1999). *The Four-leaf Clover and the Fiery Souls*. Copenhagen: The Danish Nurses' Organisation.

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