

Anna D. Wolf: The First Dean of the PUMC School of Nursing

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As a new branch of medicine, modern nursing was transplanted to China by missionaries through church-established medical schools and hospitals. As western medicine spread in China, the career of nursing took root, pullulated and bloomed. During this process, the School of Nursing at Peking Union Medical College (PUMC) played a crucial role since it started higher nursing education in China. Anna D. Wolf (1890-1985) was the first dean of the PUMC School of Nursing. It is very significant to carry out research on Wolf's work in Peking in order to understand the establishment of higher nursing education in China.

Anna D. Wolf's Living and Study Experience

Anna Dryden Wolf, one of four children and the youngest girl, was born on June 25, 1890, in Guntur, Madras Presidency in Southern India. She was.¹ Her father was Reverend I. B. Wolf, a retired Indian missionary who was secretary and treasurer of the Board of Foreign Missions of the general Synod of the Lutheran Church, headquartered in Baltimore.² Her mother was a teacher in an all woman school in India. In 1893 Wolf and her siblings returned to the United States to live with relatives in North Carolina. There she lived in conditions even more austere

than those she had known in India, and this experience left its mark. Seven years later, her mother returned to America and with the children, moved to Lutherville, Maryland.³

Anna D. Wolf's parents paid much attention to their children's education and nurtured their sense of devotion and responsibility to the society. Her strong religious faith enabled Wolf to accept the invitation to China for nursing education in the future.

Wolf earned a degree from Goucher College in 1911, graduated from the Johns Hopkins Hospital Training School in 1915 and one year later, with the help of a fellowship from the Johns Hopkins Hospital Training School, earned a Master of Art Degree from Teachers College Columbia University in New York. At Teachers College, "she made a special study of hospital hygiene and sanitation,"⁴ and while there, met her mentor Mary Adelaide Nutting (1858-1948).

Mary Adelaide Nutting graduated in 1891 with the first Johns Hopkins nursing class. In 1893, when Nutting was 35 years old, she became the second superintendent of nursing and principal of the training school after Isabel Hampton Robb's departure. She gained approval for eight-hour workdays and the elimination of cash allowances for the students. She redirected the money saved to the educational program, added teaching staff, and led an effort to set up a scholarship program for students in need. She won administrative approval to lengthen the program from two to three years and began to hire full-time instructors. In 1907 Nutting authored the first research study on schools of nursing in the United States, *The Education and Professional Position of Nurses*, which was published by the U.S. government. Nutting left Johns Hopkins in 1907 to take charge of the fledgling postgraduate collegiate program being established at Teachers College Columbia University. In accepting this position, she became the

world's first professor in the field of nursing. When Wolf came to Columbia University in 1916, she worked with Nutting, who galvanized Wolf's belief that nursing education should be separated from service in the hospital.⁵

The Vassar College Training Camp for Nurses began on June 24, 1918 and offered a summer training class for female graduate students who wanted to become hospital nurses. More than four hundred female graduate students from one hundred colleges attended this training camp, Wolf among them.⁶ This camp was very significant for Wolf in her future career.

Wolf served for three years, from 1916 to 1919, as assistant superintendent at the Johns Hopkins Hospital Training School, and as an instructor in a summer nursing course at Vassar. Both Dr. Adrian Taylor and Dr. J. Preston Maxwell closely observed Wolf's work and inquired about her performance over several months before she was recommended to become dean of the training school. Wolf excelled at teaching nursing, so Nutting believed that Wolf was the best qualified candidate to develop nursing in China.

Beginning Nursing Education in China

In order to establish a top medical education system in China, the China Medical Board (CMB) was established by the Rockefeller Foundation (RF) in 1914. Concurrently, "the Foundation would establish nurses' training schools for man and woman,"⁷ and therefore purchased the Union Medical College at Peking (北京协和医学堂) and regarded it as the base for a medical school, hospital, and nursing. In China, Nutting highly recommended Wolf to Franklin C. McLean, president of PUMC. In Nutting's opinion, since Wolf was born into a

missionary family, received advanced nursing education, aspired to nursing education, and nursing practice, she was the best candidate for the PUMC Nurses Training School. On December 2, 1918, the Executive Committee of the PUMC Trustees agreed that Wolf was eminently qualified for the position. She received her formal appointment on June 1, 1919, and came to China in August of that year.

Upon her arrival, Wolf immediately began to arrange housing for prospective students and nursing staff; assisted with administrative relationships and routines; set plans in motion for the development of a new nursing curriculum, and most importantly, to begin recruiting qualified students. She had only one year to accomplish these goals if the school was to open as planned in October 1920.⁸

What kind of nursing education method should be adopted in China? Wolf sought advice from Isabel Hampton Robb, the first president of the American Nursing Association, as well as the first superintendent of the Johns Hopkins Hospital Training School. Wolf also asked Nutting the same question, because she believed that nursing schools should be separated from hospitals. Nutting and Isabel Stewart developed a standard curriculum for nursing schools. After consulting with these pioneers of American nursing education, Wolf decided to apply their methods to Chinese reality and put forward that advanced nursing education in China, which must be separated from hospitals. Nursing services should not be supplied by student nurses. Apprenticeship-type nurse training was popular in the United States and most hospitals would engage student nurses instead of nurses. Wolf wanted to realize the ideals that the American nurses wanted.

Wolf thought that the American nurses would set good examples for Chinese student nurses. Her idea was supported by Nutting, Isabel Stewart, Goodrich, and Sally Parson. They recommended a number of American nurses to Wolf. After she arrived in Peking, Wolf spent one month inviting twelve foreign nurses to China. In her first year, Wolf brought in American nurses to study Chinese at the North China Union Language School, and also worked with the foreign nurses in the old Hsin Kai Lu Hospital. After one year, Wolf had made many preparations in terms of language, teaching, and the practice for nursing.

In April and May of 1919, six graduate nurses received appointments to the PUMC for a term of three years, at an annual salary of eight hundred dollars a year, in addition to room, board, heat, electric and laundry services. Lula A. Sweet, Florence Kelly Goodman, and Florence Bridgeman Brown were from Johns Hopkins Hospital.⁹ Sophia Packer, Kathleen Caulfield, and Mart McCoy worked at the Nurses Training School of PUMC.¹⁰ A 1918-1919 PUMC Hospital report revealed that female nurses had begun to care for male patients in the PUMC Hospital, and that only female nurses would be allowed to do formal nursing.¹¹

On September 28, 1920, the PUMC Nurses Training School opened. The first group of students included only three female nursing students, but also two classes of male nurses who were in the Union Medical College at Peking (北京协和医学堂).¹² After 1920, the number of student nurses increased yearly. In 1922, “there were twenty-one applicants, of whom eleven girls were admitted.”¹³ The last class of male nurses at PUMC graduated in June 1923, and PUMC stopped admitting male students from that point on. Zeng Xianzhang was the only student among three girls that successfully graduated in 1924. The stringent requirements

reflected the high principles of the Nurses Training School at PUMC, and laid a solid foundation for the early higher nursing education in China.

The student nurses at PUMC were required to take theory courses and practical courses taught by foreign nurses. The student nurses could receive a PUMC nursing diploma through a three to nine month program, followed by a bachelor's degree in arts and sciences with an additional two years and eleven months of study. Thus, a nursing diploma and bachelor's degree could be earned in six year and eight months.¹⁴

Two years of pre-nursing preparation/background was required by the PUMC Nursing Training School for student nurses. Wolf saw to it that student nurses received their pre-nursing preparation at the Woman's College of Peking University (later merged with Yenching University) in the fall of 1922. Therefore, pre-nursing preparation became firmly implanted within a collegiate setting rather than a hospital training situation, and the PUMC student nurses would get a wide range of knowledge before they entered into hospital practice.

Although Wolf did not think it was wise to make Yenching into a pre-nursing school, she did provide some specific suggestions regarding the laboratory, teachers, and the budget for Yenching. For example, she suggested that a hood should be added in the chemistry laboratory; that Grace Huang, who had been regarded by the student nurses school as a very helpful teacher, should not spend time teaching chemistry; and that physics should be a demonstration course of one hour a week through the services of one of the physics teachers from Yenching. Wolf thought that Faust, who possessed a Master's Degree in zoology, could possibly teach either English or

Mathematics or both, in addition to teaching biology. Wolf believed that the budget of the School of Nursing could be adjusted to meet reasonable charges.¹⁵

Whereas most American nurses were controlled by hospitals, in China, Wolf actualized to move the keystone of the nursing school from nursing practice to nursing theory. On April 20, 1923, Dr. Henry S. Houghton wrote to Green about Wolf's request to change the institution's title from the Nurses Training School to The School of Nursing. Wolf argued that "the word training school is becoming gradually obsolete in America and it smacks somewhat of the old order, when hospitals were accustomed to operate training schools in order to service their nursing service free of charge."¹⁶ Dr. Houghton agreed with Wolf. On June 18, 1923, R.S. Greene wrote to H.S. Houghton, "I have the honor to inform you that at a meeting of the Executive Committee of the Trustees of the PUMC held on June 14, 1923, the title of the department of the PUMC devoted to the training of nurses be, and it is here by, changed to The School of Nursing of the PUMC."¹⁷ Such a reform was appropriate for the higher education of nursing, and therefore, the leader in the nursing training school changed from being a superintendent nurse to a dean.

At that time, the PUMC School of Nursing of was the best nursing school in China and it could be favorably compared with western nursing schools. With the support of Wolf, the PUMC School of Nursing of was registered by the regents of the University of the State of New York on April 7, 1923.¹⁸ The graduate nurse students could go to America through a grant program. The PUMC School of Nursing was accredited in the United States. The Chinese nurse Guan Baozhen noted that except for those with a bachelor's degree in nursing for the PUMC School of Nursing, most graduate students held bachelor's of science or bachelor's of art degrees.¹⁹ Consequently,

the PUMC School of Nursing held the highest authoritative position in higher nursing education in China.

Reasons for Leaving China

Although Wolf was passionate about her job, at times her notions were naive. She once wrote to Mr. Swartz,

as the committee, appointed for the purpose of investigating facilities and opportunity for the physical welfare of the students, is to report at the next Administrative Board meeting, I am writing to ask that in the future students of the Nurses Training School be provided with means for ample physical exercises. This may include I trust, gymnastic exercise as well as the usual outdoor sports, i.e., tennis, volley ball and basket ball. The need of great attention to this type of work impresses me more and more as I visit the girls' school and hospitals. Little seems to have been done along the lines of physical education for women and surely no field presents such splendid opportunity for such development.²⁰

Wolf's idea was well-meaning, but at the same time, her suggestion was unrealistic.

Wolf was a strong-willed woman who held her opinion sometimes in disregard of the consequences and her leader's position. When Roger S. Greene (secretary of the PUMC Board of Directors) requested Houghton (President of PUMC) to minimize the time that the nurses engaged in studying the Chinese language, and in giving service to patients, he asked Wolf for her opinion. Wolf's answer to Dr. Houghton was based on her concept of ideal higher nursing education, so she indicated that the nurses helped with hospital services only in cases of emergencies and submitted a per month breakdown of their responses to emergency calls. The average appeared to be two days per month. Certainly, Wolf's answer could not have pleased Greene, who had presumed that nurses engaged in language study should be called for service on

Saturdays and Sundays, and should be prepared to help in the hospital in cases of emergency anytime.

In December 1922, an inquiry from the Johns Hopkins Hospital began a chain of events that compelled Wolf to leave Peking. Wolf had received from Dr. Winford Smith, an offer for an important position at the Training School of the Johns Hopkins Hospital, and Smith requested she send a cable reply as soon as possible. Wolf informed H.S. Houghton and told him that she had cabled to decline the offer. Wolf did not expect that the PUMC asked the Johns Hopkins Hospital to continue the offer. R.S. Greene contacted the Johns Hopkins Hospital himself. In fact, Wolf had said that she could not accept the offer in 1922, but that she might consider it if she had the chance in 1924. The PUMC was quite appreciative of Wolf's refusal to leave her present position in the short term. Greene believed, "that the Johns Hopkins Hospital is so anxious to secure Miss Wolf that [it] is likely to make only a temporary appointment for the year 1923-1924."²¹ From then on, the PUMC's attitude began to fluctuate on whether Wolf should successfully work in Peking.

Greene showed euphemistically that they did not wish to do anything to stand in the way of the advancement of Wolf's staff. Greene went along with Wolf temporarily, but he preferred that Wolf get a new position. Greene expressed, "Miss Wolf has perhaps completed the most difficult part of her work and therefore might feel interested in taking on a new opposition, though her departure would be a serious loss to our hospital even now."²² Greene also suggested that the Training School for Nurses at the Johns Hopkins Hospital award the title of associate principal to Wolf.

There were different reactions concerning whether Wolf should leave her post in Peking. In late December 1922, a note from Edwin Embree to Vincent indicated that “they should not stand in Miss Wolf’s way.”²³ Vincent agreed with Embree, “we can probably replace Miss Wolf to our advantage. She has done good work but we need someone with more poise, imagination and personal leadership.”²⁴ Both Embree and Vincent thought Wolf was the best qualified for the post in Peking, but Houghton and Greene had opposite opinions. Houghton thought, “although he would not stand in the way of her leaving very soon if she [Miss Wolf] felt inclined to accept the invitation from the Johns Hopkins and we would not urge her unduly to stay, we would be very regretful to lose her, and our judgment was that she had not completed the task she had undertaken.”²⁵

Wolf doubted whether she could be happy working in China. Greene encouraged her to choose a new position, and he tried his best to assure some good conditions for Wolf.

“The fact is that I am leaving very soon for China and am anxious to be sure before I go, that arrangements satisfactory to you have been made. I particularly hope that you will not feel under pressure to accept some position which is not entirely satisfactory to you and may not provide ample opportunity for the exercise of your special talents. I should wish to ask the China Medical Board to continue your support for some additional period to enable you to carry out your plan of studies and to secure such a vacation as may be desirable in case you are not already committed to a satisfactory position for the coming year.”²⁶

The formal invitation from the Johns Hopkins Hospital was sent in May 1924. Wolf received an offer for a continuing appointment from June 1924 to 1930, with the additional title of Dean of the School of Nursing at Johns Hopkins Hospital. Still Wolf hesitated in deciding if she should leave Peking. She still worked as carefully as before, yet became easily dissatisfied. Therefore, Greene thought that Wolf’s “good nature had been sometimes strained.”²⁷

When Wolf left Peking for a one-year furlough on August 15, 1924, she did not know if she could return to the PUMC School of Nursing. She stayed in Paris for two months and stopped over in Rome before leaving for New York. At the end of 1924, Wolf was convinced that she would not be welcomed upon her return to Peking. She wrote to M.K. Eggleston, “it has seemed advisable for me not to begin my work ... as I had hoped ... Now I am planning a trip to Florida which I am sure will give me all the rest I need.”²⁸

In fact, Henry Houghton’s opinion about Wolf’s abnegation was uncompromising. In 1924 he had heard from various people connected with the College, rather disturbing reports as to Wolf’s relations with her staff. Houghton thought that since the position offered to Wolf at The Johns Hopkins was still available, the PUMC therefore ought not urge Wolf to stay in Peking. “There seems to be a very common feeling that Miss Wolf is unable to secure and retain the loyalty, to say nothing of the affection, of large numbers of her subordinates.”²⁹

Houghton suggested that Wolf should not be urged to return, especially if she continued to feel, as she did when she left there, that her difficulties in working with the Chinese were almost insurmountable.³⁰ He strongly kept his view and wrote, “I have a warm admiration for Miss Wolf’s ability and leadership, but realize that she was finding it increasingly hard to adapt herself with patience and forbearance to some of the problems peculiar to our program. Her indifferent health and tendency to great nervous tension accentuated her difficulties.”³¹ Houghton even confidently expressed that all the clinical chiefs were in favor of Ingram as the logical successor of Wolf.

On April 8, 1925, the Trustees of the PUMC approved Wolf's resignation. Greene stated, "I should like to add that at the meeting the members of the Board also expressed individually their high regard for you and for the work you accomplished in Peking."³²

Wolf felt a strong call to return to the Johns Hopkins Training School, but was not wholly satisfied that the conditions there would enable her to provide the service she was most interested in. Therefore, Wolf left Peking and first went to Chicago where she was appointed superintendent of nurses at the Albert Billing Hospital, one of the principal units in the new school of medicine at the University of Chicago.³³

Wolf's Contribution to Chinese Nursing

Wolf had undergone a very difficult time but still did hard and effective work in Peking. She founded a nursing school, mobilized the nursing staff, and achieved higher nursing education ideals. Although Greene did not praise Wolf comprehensively, he thought Wolf had done "an excellent piece of work in organizing the training school and the nursing service of the PUMC hospital. She has established high standards and had secured a fine corps of nurses and instructors."³⁴

Henry Houghton also lauded Wolf's qualities, such as,

"her executive talents, her strong idealism and vigorous personality commanded a great deal of respect."³⁵ ... "she did a wonderful piece of work for us in putting the school on a sound basis and training a competent staff ... Miss Wolf is primarily interested in nursing education and in making that education of as high a grade as possible, but she has also been a successful administrator of the hospital nursing service."³⁶

R.S. Greene also praised Miss Wolf:

“Your executive talents and high ideals have enabled you to give the School of Nursing and the nursing service of the College, a sound organization, and to establish high standards. None of us can fully realize all the burden that you have carried and all the obstacles that you have encountered, but we do know that the task has not been light, and we see the results, in which every one connected with the College must find the greatest satisfaction.”³⁷

Wolf was a brave woman who arrived in China at age twenty-eight with only three years of teaching experience. Whether she could successfully found the first collegiate nursing education program was unknown. The task could not be accomplished without her confidence, courage or knowledge, and she made nursing an acceptable occupation for educated women in China.

Wolf was very responsible for her duties and chose good nursing students to staff the School of Nursing. In 1919, Lula A. Sweet, Florence Kelly Goodman, and Florence Bridgman Brown were all graduate nurses of the Johns Hopkins Hospital. “They have been carefully investigated by Miss Wolf and by Dr. Taylor and Dr. Maxwell, and are considered as in every way qualified for appointment.”³⁸ In the next month, another three graduate nurses were recommended by Wolf. “In accordance with your recommendation and that of Miss Wolf, we have appointed as such nurses Mrs. Sophia Packer, Miss Kathleen Caulfield, and Miss Mary McCoy, for a term of three years, beginning from date of appointment, at a salary of \$800.00 per annum together with maintenance and traveling expenses.”³⁹ According to the original plan, the PUMC Nurses Training School needed sixteen foreign nurses as supervisors, assistants and head nurses, and eight staff nurses for general duties. From 1921 to 1922, with the help of Wolf and PUMC

support, the School recruited twenty-six foreign nurses, and by 1925 the School of Nursing had enough teaching staff and the American nurses were not needed any more.

From the beginning, Wolf adopted the nursing teachers from her mother university, and it is not difficult to understand why she gave priority to the Johns Hopkins Hospital when the university called her back.

When Wolf learned that four nurses would be recommended to the Trustees for appointment as staff nurses on general duty for a term two days before its start, she wrote immediately to Edwin R. Dabree and demanded to “have action on the appointment of these four graduates nurses at as early a date as possible, in order that, if the appointments are accepted, they may have a sufficient time to make the necessary preparations and arrive in Peking before the opening of the Language School on the first of October.”⁴⁰ This showed that Wolf devoted much energy to her career.

As a good dean of the nursing school, Wolf decided not to leave Peking until a satisfactory successor could be found. She cabled Johns Hopkins that “she could not accept the offer this year (1923-1924), but [would] consider it if it could be held open until 1924.”⁴¹ She did not know that Johns Hopkins would only provide her with a temporary appointment from the year 1923 to 1924.

In 1923 Wolf proposed a change in the school’s title. This was an essential change rather than a nominal one.

“Miss Wolf has asked me to secure your judgment as to the advisability of changing the title of our nurses’ training school to THE SCHOOL OF NURSING. She suggests that the word training school is becoming gradually obsolete in America and that it smacks somewhat of the old order,

when hospitals were accustomed to operate training schools in order to secure their nursing service free of charge. In view of our efforts to establish the training of nurses on a reasonably high educational level, she would like to drop the use of a word which is somewhat offensive.”⁴²

Wolf was good at learning from others, therefore the PUMC avoided the disadvantages of American nursing education. She made the PUMC School of Nursing close its bondage of the hospital as early as possible.

Wolf created the Chinese model of higher nursing education. Through the efforts of Wolf and her workmates, nursing became a profession in China with more and more Chinese girls bravely choosing nursing as a vocation. This trend that nursing was a female profession advocated that there should be more female nurses than male nurses.⁴³

Conclusion

It was more difficult to develop and spread western nursing in China than it was western medicine. Although the Chinese people adapted and accepted western medicine, nursing was still not regarded as a profession. It was unimaginable to allow Chinese girls to touch men’s bodies and impossible that Chinese nursing students would come from rich families.

Wolf was an ordinary girl who grew up in America and was accustomed to an American life-style, climate, and fellowship. She was twenty-eight years old when she came to China and certainly missed her homeland. She wanted to come back when there were difficulties in her career, and especially when America beckoned her with the offer of a promising position. It is easy to understand a single woman’s decision to leave Peking for America.

As the first dean of the PUMC Nursing School, Wolf was responsible for establishing a nursing school caught between western civilization and traditional Chinese culture. She chose lofty criterion, aspiration, and quality as the guidelines for creating higher nursing education in China.

The PUMC also provided Wolf with an opportunity to fulfill her dream of founding a university program for nurses as well as ending the exploitation of students for service. She overcame the obstacles of language, culture and living conditions and tried her best to accommodate her work to Chinese conditions. Wolf was satisfied with her life in Peiping and stated, “it is with a great deal of joy I have learned of the progressive changes in the curriculum and the advancement made through affiliation with the Peiping University and the Health Center.”⁴⁴

As the first dean of the PUMC School of Nursing, and superintendent of nurses from June 1, 1919, Wolf completed her term of service and work in June 1925. Her experience in China provided Wolf with a foundation for her subsequent career in two other major new medical centers, the University of Chicago Clinics (Albert Billings Hospital), from 1926-1931, and the New York Cornell Medical Center, from 1931-1940, where she participated in starting and reorganizing nursing services. In China and in every situation thereafter, including her last post as director of nursing at the School of Nursing at The Johns Hopkins Hospital, 1940- 1955; Wolf sought to establish a baccalaureate nursing education program within a university.⁴⁵

Her work experience in Peking increased Wolf’s view of nursing as an occupation. Both Lawler and Dr. Winford Smith agreed that, “Miss Wolf possesses the qualifications which they seek for the associate principal of their training school, and they are so anxious to secure her

services.”⁴⁶ So The Johns Hopkins Hospital changed the appointment time after Wolf declined the original employment offer. Her experiences in education and organization, whether in China or in America, brought Wolf great success, and she became one of the excellent graduate students of the Nursing Training School at The Johns Hopkins Hospital.

The PUMC School of Nursing is the cradle where Wolf acquired her ability for independent nursing leadership. I believe that that great experience and memory has been rooted deeply in Wolf’s work and life.

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The ideas and opinions expressed in this report are those of the author and are not intended to represent the Rockefeller Archive Center.

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⁴ Adrian S. Taylor, letter to Wallace Buttrick, November 30, 1918, CMB, Box 107, Folder 767.

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- ²⁸ Anna D. Wolf, Letter to M. Eggleston, December 3, 1924, CMB, Box 107, Folder 767.
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