

## A Unique Collection of the Connecticut School of Nursing Pins

As another class of the University of Connecticut School of Nursing approaches graduation the collection of the Connecticut School of Nursing Pins is a beautiful reminder of those who came before them. As a graduating senior looking at these pins brings me a great amount of pride and accomplishment to be joining a profession of such esteemed nurses who have worn these pins. The collection is enclosed within brown wooden shadow box with a transparent reflective glass frame, which is rectangular and contains fifty pins from forty different colleges. The collection spans for over a decade from 1873- 2004.



**Figure 1 Entire Collection of Pins**

The pins are all in pristine shape most of which have their original shine. Some of the older ones have lost some of their luster over the years, however that emphasizes their rich history. They all include the name of the College as well as the year and the college's emblem. These human made pins appear to be a combination

of gold and silver and most are engraved with the schools colors. According to the *American Nursing Pin in History and Context*, “gold and gold- filled designs are found most often, nursing pins are also created from copper, specifically in copper rich regions of the nation, or sterling silver. Some of those previous metals are coated for protection. While some pins are minimally decorated, with starkly compelling monotone imprinted designs, other are richly decorated and colored. Colors may be found in enamel, jewels, colored stones, seed pearls, or a variety of metals” (Meixner, n.d.). The majority of the pins are round in shape some of them are in the shape of shields, which would be more traditional. The nightingale lamp is also a common symbol on the pins, which can be shown on the Bristol Training School pin. More information can be found on the symbolism of pins on this website

<http://www.nurse-entrepreneur-network.com/public/511.cfm> (Meixner, N.d.).



Figure 2 Bristol Training School Pin: Row one Middle Pin

The pins are displayed on black felt, which makes for a soft protective cushioning for them. The collection is in eleven symmetrical unidirectional rows although the number of pins in each row is not equal. When duplicates from the same school are present they are arranged next to each other. There is a very obvious top and bottom to the shadow box although the label has fallen from its original location.

The purpose of the nursing pinning ceremony can be traced back to the 12<sup>th</sup> century during the Crusades. During this time the Knights Hospitaller, a group of knights from the Hospital of St. John the Baptist, cared for the crusaders. Each of these knights was given a Maltese cross to be worn upon their arm (Weekly, 2010). Centuries later in the 1860's Florence Nightingale, the founder of nursing, was recognized for her tremendous service to those who were injured during the Crimean War with the Red Cross of St. George as a medal of excellence. The pin was presented as a "badge of courage" (OSUIT STAFF, 2013). This social ceremony had a great significance to Florence, as she believed "the medal was to encourage her students to faithfully serve the injured, sick and dying in challenging situation and often dangerous circumstances" (OSUIT STAFF, 2013). In the year 1916, the ceremony became routine throughout School of Nursing graduates in the United States. Since then the pin has become unique to which college the graduate attended as show in this collection. (OSUIT STAFF, 2013). More information on the ceremony can be found at [www.go.osuit.edu/communications/news/content/pinning-ceremony-dedicate-nursing-graduates](http://www.go.osuit.edu/communications/news/content/pinning-ceremony-dedicate-nursing-graduates) .

A few of the colleges including The University of Connecticut and Yale University have both an older and updated version of their school's pin. University of Connecticut's School of Nursing was the first public institution in Connecticut to offer a bachelor's degree program in nursing. By the fall of 1942, thirteen students were enrolled in UConn's School of nursing (UConn SON, n.d.). Upon graduation they received the original pin, which can be shown below compared to the new pin, which graduates now receive (UConn SON, n.d.). One of the oldest pins in the collection is from The Hartford Hospital School of Nursing from 1878 (Audet, 2014). This was the first graduation class from the institution. These nursing graduates had received two years of instruction and received a diploma (Audet, 2014).



**Figure 3 Original and Current University of Connecticut Pin**

This shadow box is a wonderful contribution to the extensive Dolan collection. It can be admired by all on the landing between Storrs Hall and Winger

Wing, which celebrates the School of Nursing and Connecticut's collection to nursing history. This artifact not only shows us the rich history of the many nursing schools in Connecticut, it is personal for all nursing students as one day we shall also have a pin from this box. This collection will allow for students to admire nursing's past as they work on becoming its future.



Figure 4 Shadow Box on Display at UConn's School of Nursing

## References

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