



UNIVERSITY OF SASKATCHEWAN
College of Nursing
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Nightingale Medicine Chest in Canada: Exploring the Secrets and Provenance



Arlene Kent-Wilkinson RN, PhD, Professor CoN;
Helen Vandenberg RN, PhD, Assoc. Professor CoN;
Letitia Johnson PhD student (History) 2022
Leegay Jagoe PhD Student (Nursing) 2024

Research Complete



...this medicine chest that came to Canada over 100 years ago waited for decades for nurses to explore its secrets...through research...

Exploring the Secrets and Provenance of the 'Nightingale Medicine Chest' in Canada



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2023, July 25



Replaced in the Cube Plexiglas on new green felt, with updated timeline card with QR Code

2023, FNMC, 4th Floor, E-Wing Room
4000.6 lounge near 4243 staff room



Research Completed:



2022 SSHRC Explore Grant:

- Exploring the Secrets and Provenance of the 'Florence Nightingale Medicine Chest' in Canada

Project Timeline:

- July 1, 2022 to Dec 31, 2024

Researchers:

- Arlene Kent-Wilkinson RN, PhD, Professor CoN;
- Helen Vandenberg RN, PhD, Assoc. Professor CoN;
- Letitia Johnson PhD student 2022 (History) RA
- Leegay Jagoe PhD student 2024 (Nursing) RA

Funded by:



Social Sciences and Humanities
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sciences humaines du Canada

Canada

Research Completed :



2022 SSHRC Explore Grant:

Kent-Wilkinson, A., & Vandenberg, H. (2022, June 7).
Awarded. Exploring the secrets and provenance of
the 'Florence Nightingale medicine chest' in Canada.
SSHRC Explore Grant. Submitted March 11, 2022.
Awarded \$6999 on June 7, 2022. Project Timeline:
July 1, 2022 to Dec 30, 2024.

- Ethics Approval ID# E366, June 28, 2022 Exemption (Document search)
- Ethics Approval ID# 3658, October 17, 2022, (Qualitative interviews)

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Land Acknowledgement

National

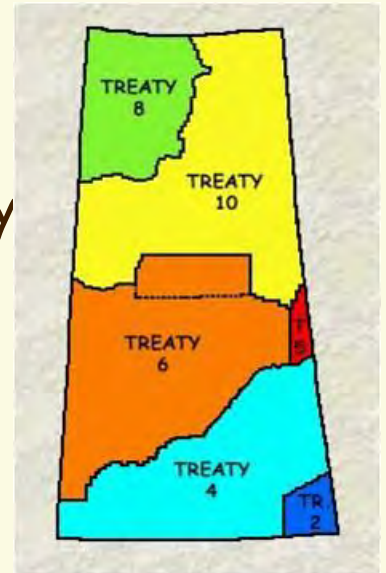
- In Canada, from coast to coast to coast, we acknowledge the ancestral unceded territories and treaty lands of the First Nation, Inuit, and Métis peoples who have been displaced with colonization.

Provincial

- We acknowledge in this province, the University of Saskatchewan is on Treaties #2, 4, 5, 6, 8, and 10 lands.

Local

- In Saskatoon, we are on Treaty #6 land.



Treaty #6 Medicine Chest Clause

- Treaty # 6 was the most significant treaty in relation to health.
- Treaty #6 contained the '**Medicine Chest Clause**'.
- The medicine chest was kept in the home of the Indian Agent for use by, or at the discretion of the Indian Agent.
- Interpretation - health care to all Aboriginal people for all time.
 - ❑ Medicare. SK Premier Tommy Douglas
 - ❑ 1960-1962, *Saskatchewan Medical Care Insurance Act*
 - ❑ 1984 *Universal Health Care - Canada Health Act*



Outline of Presentation:



- Objectives
- Rationale
- Purpose
- Background
- Research Questions
- Ethics
- Methodology -Historical/Material History
- Results
- Significance of the Research
- Dissemination of Knowledge
- Future Plans

Florence Nightingale Medicine Chest in Canada



Nightingale Medicine Chest, c. 2022

Professional Photos by David Stobbe, Commissioned by College of Nursing, 2022

Florence Nightingale Medicine Chest in Canada



Front - closed



Back - closed

Florence Nightingale Medicine Chest in Canada



Front - open



Back - open

1956-Current Florence Nightingale Medicine Chest Questions?



- A trip to the Florence Nightingale Museum in 2018 validated that the Medicine Chest (box) they proudly have on display is not like ours (cabinet) in Canada, it is smaller, but looks to be of the same era.



Nightingale Medicine Chest in Canada



1974 Information card in display case with Chest



FLORENCE NIGHTINGALE'S MEDICINE CHEST

This chest came to the School of Nursing after it had been given to the College of Medicine by Dr. and Mrs. H.D. Weaver in 1956.

It was given by Miss Nightingale's sister Lady Verney to Mr. I. Milsom, gardner to the family. Mr. Milsom came to Saskatoon to do landscaping for the City sometime about 1890 and eventually gave this chest to Dr. and Mrs. Weaver.

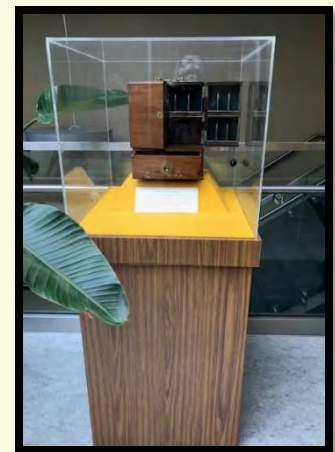
Best Kept Secrets:



- What may be one of the University of Saskatchewan's (USask) best kept secrets is an artifact that was donated to the University in 1956; a medicine chest whose original owner was claimed to be none other than Florence Nightingale who took it to the Crimea with her!

The medicine chest is proudly displayed in a five foot plexiglass display case at the College of Nursing.

- Some of us walk by this medicine chest every day, and do not notice it.
- Many faculty, staff and students did not know we even had this chest here at CoN
- Most did not know its amazing history.



Best Kept Secrets: (cont.)



- From time to time, we show it to our visiting scholars, ...they take pictures, and are amazed and maybe like us ...questioned:

"Did this medicine chest really once belong to Florence Nightingale?"

We did not realize -
this was our research question-
and we secretly had this question for years...



Florence Nightingale

Historical

Background

See 2a & 2b PPTS

Life & Legacy

See 03 PPT

Custodians



Results: Provenance



Custodians of the Medicine Chest

NIGHTINGALE, Florence (1820-1910)

- (dob: 1820, May 12 - 1920, August 13) @90y
 - born in Florence, Italy; died in London, England
- VERNEY, Lady Parthenope (Nightingale)** (1819-1890)
- (dob: 1819-April 19 - 1890, May 12) @72y
 - born in Naples, Italy; died in London, England

MILSOM, Isaac (1858-1933)

- (dob: 1858, July 22 - 1933, April 28) @75th year
- born in Didmorton nr Oldbury, Tetbury, Gloucestershire, England;
- died in Philadelphia PA,

MILSOM, Mary Ellen (McNabb) (1861-1917)

- (dob: 1861, August 12-1954, September 13) @55y
- born in Assleagh, Mayo, Ireland; died in Saskatoon, SK, CA

Milson family immigrates to Canada (1912) & 7 Children

- **Oldest son already in Manitoba, Canada**

WEAVER, Dr. Herbert (Hugh) Dutton (1867-1942)

- (dob: 1867, March 12- 1942, September 12) @75y
- Born in Altrincham, Cheshire, England; died in Saskatoon, SK, CA

WEAVER, Alice (Thomas) Weaver (1880-1954)

- (dob: **1880-1954**) @74y
- Born in Stellarton, Nova Scotia, NS; died in Halifax, NS



Results: Provenance



Relatives of Custodians of the Medicine Chest (cont.)

- Milsons and Weavers became friends 1914-1918
- Mary Ellen Milson died in 1917
- Isaac Milson moved to Regina in 1918, then to US in 1921
- Around 1918 Medicine chest passed from Milsons to Weavers
- Dr Weaver died 1942, Mrs Weaver in 1954

THOMAS, Lewis Herbert (1917-1983) (nephew, SK provincial archivist)

- (1917, April 13 - 1983, November 22) @66y
- Born in Saskatoon, SK, died in Regina/Yorkton, SK
- Nephew of Alice Weaver

THOMAS, Margaret Eleanor (1917-2015)

- (1917, June 29 - 2015, May 15) @97y
- Born in Yorkton, SK; died in Ottawa, ON in 2015
- Wife of Lewis Herbert Thomas

1956 - University of Saskatchewan

1974 - College of Nursing

- University of Saskatchewan (1907...)
- University of Saskatchewan/College of Medicine (1926...)
- University of Saskatchewan/College of Nursing (1938...)

(Ancestry.com, 2020; Census of Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta, 2020; Census of England; Census of Ireland, 2020; My Heritage.com 2023)



Abstract/Introduction



- An historic nursing artifact that once belonged to Florence Nightingale has been waiting decades for research to explore its mysteries.
- The medicine chest has been in Saskatoon since 1912 and at the University of Saskatchewan since 1956.
- A team of researchers at the College of Nursing are just now beginning to explore the *Secrets and Provenance of the Nightingale Medicine Chest in Canada*.



Introduction



- Documents in the archives at the University of Saskatchewan and the City of Saskatoon, along with genealogy databases and country census revealed knowledge about its custodians who were prominent citizens in Saskatoon, SK.
- We now know so much more about the lives of the custodians of the chest and their families; all we had before was their first initials of the men to whom the chest was passed.
- It may have been the women who were far more influential in the gift transfer of the medicine chest due to their relationship with Florence Nightingale.

Objectives:



- ❑ Validate the authenticity of original ownership to Florence Nightingale;
- ❑ Trace the provenance of the medicine chest from 1850s to the current date; and
- ❑ Establish a research team and lay out future projects.

Rationale:



- ❑ To date, the details or timeline of the history of the medicine chest has never been compiled.
- ❑ Initial research exploring the validity of this medicine chest in Canada will lead to more publications, presentations, and further research about this historical artifact and its significance.

Purpose:



- ❑ Has this historical object been a 'best kept secret' because we found it difficult to believe it could be Florence Nightingale's medicine chest?



Florence Nightingale
1820-1910

Research Question(s)



Initial Research Questions

- ❑ Did this medicine chest here in Canada really once belong to Florence Nightingale?
- ❑ Did she really take this medicine chest to the Crimea?
- ❑ Is there more documentation somewhere that will validate this claim that it once belonged to Florence Nightingale and that she took it to the Crimea with her?
- ❑ If we found living descendants of the custodians, would they be able to validate through awareness of their family history if this medicine chest really once belonged to Florence Nightingale.



Medicine Chest Mysteries:



Research Questions about the Validity of the Chest....

- ❑ What evidence do we need to prove validity?
 - Archival documents of written accounts
 - Identify the custodians through genealogy data bases and trace their lives by country census, birth, marriage & death certificates
 - Interview accounts with retired faculty (professor emeritis)
 - Find if possible and interview live custodian descendants

- ❑ What methodology do we use for artifacts?
 - Historical Research /Material History



Medicine Chest Mysteries: (cont.)



Research Questions about the Custodians of the Chest....

- ☐ Who exactly were the people identified to be once in possession (custodians) of the chest?
- ☐ What were the first names of the people mentioned?
[only initials were given, i.e., Lady Verney, Mr. I. Milson and Mrs. & Dr. H. D. Weaver]
- ☐ Why did lady Verney give the medicine chest to her gardener?
- ☐ What was their relationship to Florence Nightingale?
- ☐ What was their connection to each other?
- ☐ Was Mr. I. Milsom married?
- ☐ Did he have a family or did he come to Canada by himself?
- ☐ Why did the Milsoms give the chest to the Weavers?

Medicine Chest Mysteries: (cont.)



Research Questions about the artifact itself... Provenance

- ☐ When & where was it made?
- ☐ Are there any markings on the bottom of it?
- ☐ What type of wood is it made of?
- ☐ What was the medicine chest used for?
- ☐ What medicines did it once contain?
- ☐ How much is this historical artifact worth?
- ☐ Does/should the university have it insured?



Data Sources/Data Collection:



Primary & Secondary Sources

- ☐ University archives (College of Medicine; College of Nursing);
- ☐ City of Saskatoon archives;
- ☐ Provincial (SK) archives;
- ☐ Genealogy databases (Ancestry; My Heritage);
- ☐ Country census (England, Ireland, Canada);
- ☐ Military Records (WWI);
- ☐ Newspaper articles/archives (Saskatoon Star Phoenix);
- ☐ Books (nursing education, Florence Nightingale publications)
- ☐ Museums (Florence Nightingale Museum in London, England)
- ☐ Retired Faculty (Professor Emeritus)
- ☐ Living relatives, descendants of the custodians

Gaps in Literature



Very little scholarly analysis of the medicine chest has been published, nor material history of Nightingale's former possessions.

However, many museums and archives do display objects that were possessions of Nightingale.

The limited information available about medicine chest, left us with many gaps we were curious about to fill in, as listed in the question or mysteries of the medicine chest.



Ethics



Ethics Approval ID# E366, June 28, 2022 Exemption (Document search)
Ethics Approval ID# 3658, October 17, 2022, (Qualitative interviews)

Although this research is mostly an archival document search there is a qualitative component that we sought and were awarded ethical approval.

- ☐ Oral Interview(s): In addition to synthesizing historical documentation, the project will attempt to contact descendants of the original custodians of the medicine chest (grandchildren, great grandchildren).
- ☐ Oral interviews (via phone, zoom, or in-person)
- ☐ Interview questions about any family history that they know of re the existence of the medicine chest and their grandparents/great grandparents, photos, etc.
- ☐ Oral History from Emeritus/ Retired faculty

Methodology: Historical Research



Historical Research

- ❑ Historical research can offer new insights into understanding of past events and how processes have changed over time to inform the present, but considerations must be made to who, how and why certain documents and artifacts are retained and preserved (Bloch, 1984).
- ❑ The context is the environment in which the events occur, and understanding the historical context becomes imperative in interpreting historical artifacts and events (Bloch, 1984).
- ❑ In historical research, identification of source material is necessary to determine if there is enough existing material to embark on a research project that will answer the research questions (Glass, 1998)

Methodology: Material History



Theoretical Framework and Context/Conceptual Approach

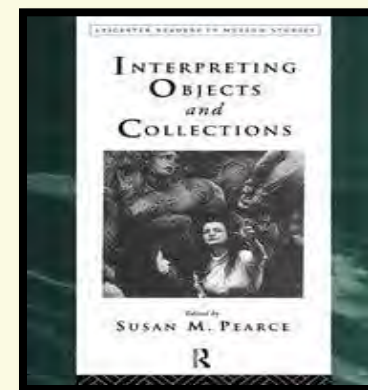
- ❑ Material history was the main methodology to compile evidence of authenticity of the medicine chest (Elliot et al., 1994).
- ❑ The journey of the medicine chest from the Victorian era to present day was traced through all documented sources of its existence, and of the custodians who had it in their possession.
- ❑ Initial examination suggests that although the movement of the chest through male custodians has often been highlighted, this study may reveal that the women related to these custodians were far more significant in why the gift was transferred.

Methodology: Material History (cont.)



Material History

- ❑ The methodological design is that of material history and will include an archival document search (Elliot et al., 1994).
- ❑ Utilizing Elliot and colleagues' material history methodology we will learn more about the object's:
 1. Material,
 2. Construction,
 3. Function,
 4. Provenance,
 5. Value.



Methodology: Material History (cont.)



Material History

Primary sources:

- Archival documents
(To validate whether or not this object belonged to Nightingale or was used during the Crimean War, 1853-56).

Secondary sources:

- Studies of Nightingale's history; and,
- Nursing history during the Crimean
(To understand more about the use of the medicine chest).
- History of similar material objects
(To learn more about the valuing of these objects as it relates to women's and nursing history).

Methodology: Material History (cont.)



Data Collection (Cont.)

Document research collected from multiple sources:

- University archives [Tim Hutchinson];
- College of Medicine & Nursing archives [Laurie Wing];
- Campus News Archives [Jim Shewaga];
- City of Saskatoon Archives [Jeff O'Brien];
- Newspaper archives for articles in Saskatoon about the medicine chest and its owners [Jeff O'Brien];
- Genealogy databases, country census, immigration, military records [Dan Wilkinson, Gary Rains];
- Books on nursing education [late Yvonne Brown];

Methodology: Qualitative



Data Collection (Cont.)

- Genealogy databases (Ancestry.com; My Heritage.com) to validate the lives, occupation and movements of custodians.
- Genealogy data bases will search for descendants of the Milsom's (seven children) and the Weaver's (nephew);
[Ancestry.com: Dan Wilkinson]
[My Heritage.com: Gary Rains]
- Attempt to contact any living relatives (grandchildren, great-grandchildren descendants) to determine if they have any knowledge or family history about the medicine chest or family photos.

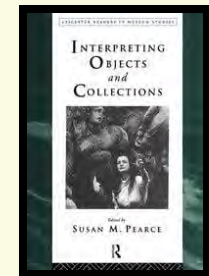
Methodology - Material History (cont.)



Data Analysis:

The core activities of the material history methodology model include a step-by-step analysis of:

1. Material,
2. Construction,
3. Provenance,
4. Function, and
5. Value of the object.



These properties will be considered in order as listed to anticipate the examination of an artifact at the starting point of analysis before the consultation of supplementary source material (Elliot et al., 1994).

Methodology - Material History (cont.)



Data Analysis: (cont.) (Elliot, n.d.)

1. Material
2. Construction
3. Provenance
4. Function
5. Value of the object

Table 3
The Analysis Method

Question Categories

Analysis Procedure	Material	Construction	Function	Provenance	Value
<i>Step 1</i> Observable Data (examination of the single artifact)					
<i>Step 2</i> Comparative Data (comparisons made with similar artifacts)					
<i>Step 3</i> Supplementary Data (other sources of information introduced)					
<i>Step 4</i>	Conclusions				



Results of the Research (to date) Exploring the Secrets and Provenance of the 'Nightingale Medicine Chest' in Canada

RESULTS DOCUMENT SEARCH

1. Material

Questions can be answered through:

Step 1

A-Direct observation of the artifact;

Step 2

B-Comparisons with similar artifacts;

Step 3

C-after supplementary evidence

(e.g., printed/written sources) are consulted;

Step 4

D-Conclusions

Results - 1.MATERIAL



Results/Responses to Material Questions

Material

31. The natural, organic and/or man-made materials composing the artifact and completing its appearance. Also the investigator's sensory response to the use or occurrence of those materials in the artifact.

1. What materials were used to produce the artifact and complete its appearance? (Quality of materials used?)
2. Did the materials used influence the object's final form?
3. Are these materials used in similar artifacts?
4. Where did the unworked materials originate?
5. Do the materials employed suggest trade patterns/practices?

Examination



- Research began with the medicine chest being carefully taken out of the five foot plexi-glass display case, within which it has been housed at the College Nursing.
- An examination of the bottom of the chest revealed no markings or date as to when or where made, green baize was glued to the entire bottom of the chest.
- We were able to have professional photos taken of the chest while out of the case, before placing it back into its secure home.



Results: Material/Construction



Examination of Chest



Front: Closed, Lock & Key



Front Open: Cabinet cubicles
lined with green baize

Results: Material/Construction



Examination of Chest



Back: Closed.



Back Open: sliding panel reveals hidden compartment Cabinet cubicles lined with green baize.

Results: Material/Construction



Examination of Chest



Top:
Handle & Plaque added
when donated to USask

PRESENTED BY
DR. & MRS H. D. WEAVER,
Saskatoon

Results: Material/Construction



Examination of Chest



Bottom-green
baize lined
(glued) to base;
No visible
markings

2023, July 25



**Signature?
bottom of
medicine
chest
drawer**

**F.....?
A.....?**

RESULTS
DOCUMENT SEARCH

2. Construction

Step 1

A-Questions can be answered through direct observation of the artifact;

Step 2

B-Questions can be answered through-comparisons with similar artifacts; and,

Step 3

C-Questions asked after supplementary evidence (e.g., printed/written sources) are consulted.

Step 4

D-The formulation of conclusions derived from the preceding questions

Results - 2.CONSTRUCTION



Results/Responses to Construction Questions

Construction

32. The methods employed to produce the artifact (or, if completely natural and/or organic, the methods used to physically arrange such materials for the physical or mental benefit of man). A physical description of the artifact's appearance to the observer and the qualitative intuitive judgement of the piece as viewed by itself, and later, in comparison with others like itself.

1. How was the artifact fabricated and finished? (a detailed examination including texture, size, etc.)
2. What construction methods (and tools) would be required to produce this artifact? (Handmade/ machine made? Quality and complexity of construction?)
3. How was the object's appearance affected or influenced by the construction techniques employed?

Results -CONSTRUCTION (cont.)



Results/Responses to Construction Questions

Construction (cont.)

4. Is any form of ornamentation/decoration present? If so, what type?
5. How does this ornamentation/decoration affect the artifact's appearance?
6. Are any markings or inscriptions present?
7. Are there any signs of wear or repair?
8. Does the construction of this artifact differ greatly from similar objects? (objects by the same maker and others)
9. Is its design comparable to like objects? (Is the overall design a set style?)
10. What stage of development or evolution does this artifact represent when compared with both older and more recent objects of a similar type? (Does the design aid in dating?)
11. What degree of sophistication is represented by the artifact? (style, method of construction, etc.)
12. Is the artifact a reproduction?

Results: CONSTRUCTION



Examination of Chest - Overall Condition



Worn condition, which appears to be from normal extensive use

Results: Material/Construction



Examination of Chest - Condition



Damage noted to table base of cabinet over the drawer
Appears to have been well used in its time. Looks as if there are stains on the green baize due to past liquid spill.

Lock and Key



Evidence of damage
and repair



Top - Handle & Plaque Added

When gifted by Weaver estate to University of Saskatchewan



2. Construction



- Constructed from wood by highly skilled cabinet makers;
- Made in the 18th & 19th century;
- Fitted out by chemists
- Sold at apothecaries in London, England;
- Often owned by affluent individuals for home or long journeys;
- Used to store medical remedies for common ailments;
- Typically contained opium-based painkillers, laxatives, smelling salts and other herbal tinctures;



RESULTS: Construction



Construction of the Chest

Size: 12"h, x16"w, x8"d

Description:

The medicine chest is made of dark brown wood, possibly mahogany. FRONT CABINET: There are double opening front cabinet doors. On the inside of each door are six partitions or cubicles with six more partitions across the top of the back wall within the open chest; each individual cubicle is lined with green baize. DRAWER: There is one single drawer spanning the width of the chest beneath the double doors. BACK: At the back of the medicine chest is a secret compartment that opens by a sliding wood panel; inside of which could have been concealed the dangerous drugs and poisons of the day! HARDWARE: The original key is still there to the lock system for the cabinet doors and the drawer; there is also a metal latch lever to close the left cabinet door. TOP: The top of the chest has a metal handle and a plaque has been added, stating the chest was presented to the College of Medicine by Dr., & Mrs. H. D. Weaver. BOTTOM: The bottom of chest is completely covered in green baize; no markings as to the year or make is visible. CONDITION: The medicine chest is only in fair condition, as it appears to have been well-used in its time.

Results: CONSTRUCTION



Comparisons with Other Chests

- Christies Auction noted that there was often not markings on most of these chest of this era in England.
- See Christie Auction website
- See article from Australia Museum

Turnbull, A. (2011, June 23). Unveiling a medicine chest. *Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences*.

<https://maas.museum/inside-the-collection/2011/06/23/unveiling-a-medicine-chest/>



A9245 Ships Medicine Chest, England,
1836 Collection: Powerhouse Museum,
(Turnbull, 2011)

Results: Construction/Function



Comparisons with Other Chests

2011 Powerhouse Museum in Western NSW, Australia

- In 2011, Alison Lykissas, Museum Studies Masters Intern, for 10 weeks at the Powerhouse Museum in Western NSW, Australia, researched an interesting object of interest, a Medicine Chest.
- Made by cabinet maker sitting in a noisy London workshop.
- He employed considerable skill and craftsmanship to create a small, well finished cedar chest that still operates smoothly 175 years later (Turnbull, 2011)
- The chest then moved to a London chemist and druggist, Thomas Keating & Co., St. Paul's Church yard, London, England.
- Pharmacy customers were probably relatively affluent.
- Medicine chest resided with owners until packed upon a sailing ship to the colonies! (Turnbull, 2011)
- Traced several scenarios of owners (custodians) and timelines before being donated to the Powerhouse Museum in 1983
- Gift of D H Dougan and D F H D Dougan, on July 1983
- Anni Turnbull was the Curator of the Museum.



A9245 Ships Medicine Chest, England, 1836 Collection: Powerhouse Museum, (Turnbull, 2011)

Powerhouse Collection. (2023). *Domestic medicine chest*. <https://collection.maas.museum/object/203444>
Turnbull, A. (2011, June 23). *Unveiling a medicine chest*. Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences. Powerhouse Museum. Western NSW, Australia.

<https://maas.museum/inside-the-collection/2011/06/23/unveiling-a-medicine-chest/>

RESULTS
DOCUMENT SEARCH

3.Function

Step 1

A-Questions can be answered through direct observation of the artifact;

Step 2

B-Questions can be answered through-comparisons with similar artifacts; and,

Step 3

C-Questions asked after supplementary evidence (e.g., printed/written sources) are consulted.

Step 4

D-The formulation of conclusions derived from the preceding questions

Results - FUNCTION



Results/Responses to Function Questions

Function

33. The reason(s) for the artifact's production and the use that was made of it. Its effectiveness for the role intended, including attendant social function whether intended or not.

1. Why was the artifact produced?
2. What function did this artifact perform?
3. How well did the artifact perform its intended function?
4. Was the object's functional performance affected by its design, materials used, construction methods employed or the ornamentation applied? (Do any of these hinder or reduce the artifact's effectiveness?)
5. Does the artifact's function reveal anything about its maker/owner?
6. What is its function today and has its function changed?

Results: Function



Comparison to other chests of this era Ancient Medicine Chests - 1700-1850s



Treaty #6 Medicine Chest Clause
Medicine chest kept at home of the
Indian Agent to be used at his
discretion for medical ailments of
Indigenous people on the Reserves
in Canada



A9245 Ships Medicine Chest, England,
1836 Collection: Powerhouse Museum,
(Turnbull, 2011)



Medicine Box at Florence
Nightingale Museum in London
England that opened in 1989

Results: FUNCTION



Comparisons to other Chests

How was it Used? What Would Have Been in the Medicine Chests?

- Nightingale took medicine chests (like the one in Canada and the medicine chest or box displayed at the Florence Nightingale Museum FNM: 2023h) to the Crimea.
- Most of the medicines in it were for treating gastric complaints, and many were highly toxic if used inappropriately.
- Paregoric Elixir had painkilling properties but was largely used as an anti-diarhoea remedy, while Aromatic Confection was seen as a tonic that could also purge the system of trapped wind. Essence of Ginger, Citric Acid, Powdered Rhubarb and Carbonate of Magnesia and Soda were used to relieve flatulence and spasms of the stomach and bowels.
- She also carried quinine for malaria, and Carbonate of Potassium for fever. The chest at the FNM also has a tiny set of scales and measures, and a beaker for measuring liquids (Daily Mail, 2020; FNM, 2023h).

Results: Function

What Nightingale medicine chest(s) were used for?

Medicine Box at



Florence took this medicine chest to the Crimean War for her and her nurses to use if needed. Most of the medicines are for upset stomachs or diarrhoea, showing Florence's foresight. It contains quinine for malaria, ipecacuanha wine used for dysentery or coughs and carbon of potassium for fever. Aromatic Confection was a tonic and would also purge the system of blocked wind. Paregoric Elixir has painkilling properties but was largely used as an anti-diarrhoea remedy. Essence of ginger, citric acid, powdered rhubarb, carbonate of magnesia, and soda were to relieve flatulence and spasms of the stomach and bowels. It also contains two boxes of pills labelled 'Tonic Pills' and 'Cough Pills' and a tiny set of scales and measures, and a glass beaker for measuring liquids. Much of the contents of the chest are highly toxic.

1934 0038 and 0039

Florence Nightingale Museum in London, England

Medicine Chest (Box). Florence took this (small 6"X5"X4") medicine chest (box) to the Crimean War for her and her nurses to use if needed. Most of the medicines are for upset stomach and diarrhea, showing Florence's foresight. It included quinine for malaria, ipecacuanha wine used for dysentery or coughs and carbon of potassium for fever. Aromatic confection was a tonic and was also used to purge the system of blocked wind. Paregoric elixir has painkilling properties but was largely used as an anti-diarrhea remedy. Essence of ginger, citric acid, powdered rhubarb, carbonate of magnesia, and soda were to relieve flatulence, and spasms of the stomach and bowels. The medicine chest also contains two containers of pills labelled "tonic pills" and "cough pills", a tiny set of scales and measures, and a glass beaker for measuring liquids. Much of the contents of the chest are highly toxic (Florence Nightingale Museum [FNM]: 0694 and 0596).

Small Medicine Chest (box) approximate size 6"X5"X4". FNM: 0694 and 0596

What is the function today?



1850s Medicine chest



1920s Victorian Order of Nurses Kit



Medicine (Doctor's) Bag



Modern day Medicine cabinets

RESULTS
DOCUMENT SEARCH

4.Provenance

Step 1

A-Questions can be answered through direct observation of the artifact;

Step 2

B-Questions can be answered through-comparisons with similar artifacts;

Step 3

C-Questions asked after supplementary evidence (e.g., printed/written sources) are consulted;

Step 4

D-The formulation of conclusions derived from the preceding questions.

Results - PROVENANCE



Results/Responses to Provenance Questions

Provenance

34 The artifact's geographic place and time of origin, its maker or arranger (if naturally occurring such as a walk-way made of flagstone), its owner if different from the maker and its history, including alterations or evolution from its point of origin to the present. The design of the artifact, including that represented through the artifact's content as articulated through observable data, comparisons with other artifacts, both similar and dissimilar, and the use of supplementary data.

1. Where and when was the object produced?
2. Who was the maker?
3. Where and how was the artifact used?
4. Who was the original owner of the object?
5. When and where did the original owner live and what was his social status, trade, etc.?
6. Who were the subsequent owners and where? Plus any other information on the object's history, owners, and maker(s), etc.

Only Information on File:



Only the following information on a card was previously known about the medicine chest:



FLORENCE NIGHTINGALE'S MEDICINE CHEST

This chest comes to the School of Nursing after it been given to the College of Medicine by Dr. and Mrs. H.D. Weaver in 1956.

It was given by Miss Nightingale's sister Lady Verney to Mr. I. Milsom, gardener to the family. Mr. Milsom came to Saskatoon to do landscaping for the City sometime **about 1890** and eventually gave this chest to Dr. and Mrs. Weaver.

- 1890 was year that Lady Vervey died; Milsom's immigrated in 1912 not 1890 according to Census of Canada; Amnesty & My Heritage data bases)

Results: Provenance



Findings: Research Questions about Custodians of the Chest....

- Who exactly were the people identified to be once in possession of the chest?
- What were the first names of the people mentioned?
[only initials were given, i.e., Lady Verney, Mr. I. Milson and Mrs. & Dr. H. D. Weaver]
- Why did Lady Verney give the medicine chest to her gardener?
- What was their relationship to Florence Nightingale?
- What was their connection to each other?
- Was Mr. I. Milson married?
- Did he have a family or did he come to Canada by himself?
- Why did the Milsoms give the chest to the Weavers?

Results: Provenance (cont.)



Medicine Chest Mysteries

Research Questions about the artifact itself?

- When & where was it made?
- Are there any markings on the bottom of it?
- What type of wood is it made of?
- What was the medicine chest used for?
- What medicines did it once contain?
- How much is this historical artifact worth?
- Does/should the university have it insured?



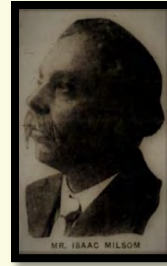
Results: Provenance

Data Sources/Consulted:



- University archives (College of Medicine; College of Nursing);
- City of Saskatoon archives;
- Provincial (SK) archives;
- Newspaper articles/archives (Saskatoon Star Phoenix);
- Genealogy databases (Ancestry; My Heritage);
- Country census (England, Ireland, Canada);
- Military Records (WWI);
- Books (nursing education, Florence Nightingale publications);
- Museums (Florence Nightingale Museum in London, England);
- Retired Faculty (professor emeritus);
- Saskatoon Horticultural Society.

Results: Provenance



City of Saskatoon Archives

Saskatoon Daily Star (1914).

Provenance.

- Connected that the two men Mr. Isaac Milsom and Dr H. D. Weaver knew each other.
- Both were listed as members of the Saskatoon Horticultural society at a Flower Show where they were judging garden displays, along with other known members of the newly formed Society in 1913.

Saskatoon Daily Star. (1914, July 28). *TWO day's flower show this year.*

Saskatoon Horticultural and Arboricultural Association (p. 6).

28 Jul 1914 6 - Star-Phoenix at Newspapers.com.pdf

<https://www.newspapers.com/image/507540440>

Results: Provenance



City of Saskatoon Archives

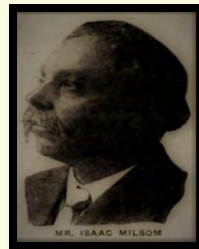
Saskatoon Daily Star (1917).

- **Provenance.** Connection to Florence Nightingale
- In our document search, no doubt the best evidence that the medicine chest really did belong to Florence Nightingale was this article in the Saskatoon Daily Star (1917).
- The article about the death of Mrs Isaac Milson's provides an account of her extraordinary life (without providing her first name - Mary Ellen) which was indicative of the time.
 - Highly educated: Trinity University, Dublin and Oxford University, Eng.
Had several influential personal friends
 - **Intimate friend of Florence Nightingale**

Saskatoon Daily Star. (1917, September 15). *Mrs. Milsom had famous friends in old country.*

[15 Sep 1917 6 - Star-Phoenix at Newspapers.com.pdf](#)

Results: Provenance



Document Search:

1918 & 1933 Saskatoon Star Phoenix Archives

Provenance:

- 1918 Article stated Mr. Milson left to go to Regina after wife died.
- 1933 Article on his death states he died at age 75 - thereby validating that the Ancestry.com date of birth was more accurate over the My Heritage.com account.
- 1933 Article stated Mr. Isaac Milson, former Saskatoon resident was the first director of the Saskatoon Horticultural Society.

Ancestry.com. (2020). 1933, April 28. *Philadelphia, Pennsylvania Death Certificates 1906-1967 for Isaac Milsom*. Date of Birth: July 22, 1858; Date of Death: April 28, 1933. Cause of Death: Diabetes Mellitus. (Ancestry.com membership: Dan Wilkinson, May 15, 2020).

Saskatoon Star Phoenix. (1918, April). *Isaac Milsom. Goes to Regina* [2020-225-SP-1918-00-04]

Saskatoon Star Phoenix. (1933, May 15). *Dead: Capt. Isaac Milsom*. [2020-225-SP-1933-05-15].

An open wooden toolbox with a handle on top. The interior is divided into several compartments, some with green felt lining. The bottom section is a separate drawer-like compartment with a metal latch. The toolbox is made of light-colored wood and is shown against a plain white background.

76

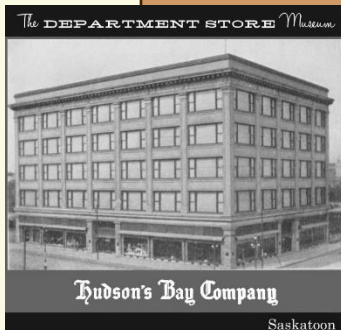
1940, January 18



Invite Ad to Nurse's Tea on Friday, Jan 19, 1940, featuring the Florence Nightingale Medicine Chest

THE BRITISH GRADUATE NURSES NO. 1
INVITE YOU TO A TEA

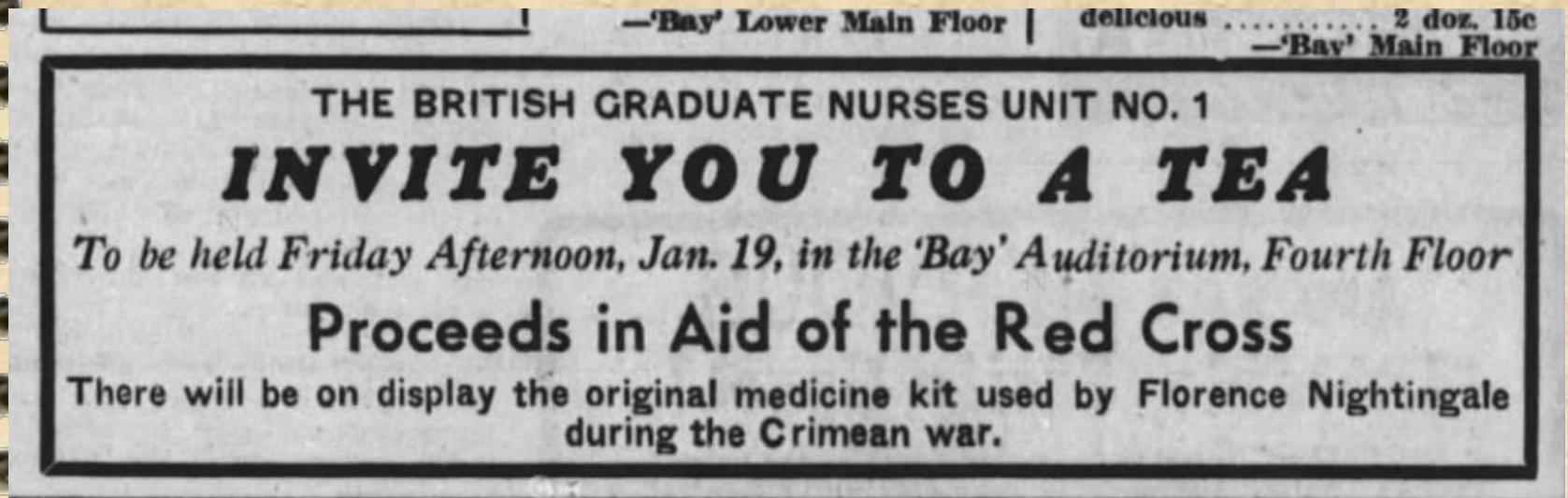
To be held Friday Afternoon, Jan. 19, in the 'Bay' Auditorium, Fourth Floor
Proceeds in Aid of the Red Cross
There will be on display the original medicine kit used by Florence Nightingale
during the Crimean war



1940 January 18

Saskatoon Star Phoenix. (1940, January 18). *Advertisement invitation to Nurse's Tea on Friday, Jan 19, 1942.* [2020-225-SSP-1940-01-18]

**Secondary documentation, Medicine Chest belonging to
Florence Nightingale who took it to the Crimea**



Saskatoon Star Phoenix. (1940, January 18). *Advertisement invitation to Nurse's Tea on Friday, Jan 19, 1942.* [2020-225-SSP-1940-01-18]. [20 Jan 1940 8 - Star-Phoenix at Newspapers.com.pdf](#)

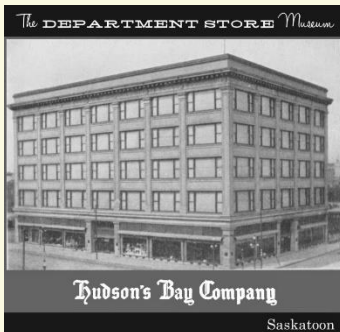
Saskatoon Star Phoenix. (1940, January 20). *Exhibit owned by Florence Nightingale at Nurse's Tea Friday: Successful function arranged in aid of Red Cross in Hudson's Bay Company Store attracts many visitors.* The Women's Page (p. 8). [2020-225-SSP-1940-01-20
<https://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=SCE0ypLQHGC&dat=19400120&printsec=frontpage&hl=en>

1940, January 19(cont.)



Nurses Tea at the Bay

- A Nurse's Tea was held at the Hudson's Bay Store in downtown Saskatoon.
- The successful event, attended by over 300 people, featured on display the Florence Nightingale Medicine Chest.
- Owners of the chest at that time were Dr. and Mrs. H. D. Weaver (Saskatoon Daily Star, 1940).



1940, January 19 (cont.)



Nurses Tea at the Bay, January 19, 1940

A Nurses Tea and Red Cross fundraiser held at the Hudson Bay store auditorium in downtown Saskatoon showcased the medicine chest, with the claim that this medicine chest was used by Florence and her nurses in the Crimean War (Saskatoon Star Phoenix, 1940).

- Over 300 people attended this successful fundraiser hosted by the British Graduate Nurses Unit No 1, along with Dr. & Mrs Weaver, who were recognized as the current owners of the Chest (Saskatoon Star Phoenix, 1940).



1940 - January 19 (cont.)

Nurses Tea at the Bay



<1850s medicine chest



?1820s Victorian Order of Nurses Kit

... at the Nurse Tea, the more modern nursing Victorian Order of Nurses Kit or black leather bag was compared to the >1850 wooden medicine chest.

Results: Provenance



Document Search: 1942 Saskatoon Star Phoenix Archives

Provenance:

- *1942 Article on death of Dr H. D. Weaver provides account of the life of this prominent Saskatoon citizen and his early involvement in the Saskatoon Horticultural Society often having meetings in their home.*



Saskatoon Star Phoenix. (1942, September 14). *Death takes Dr. Weaver: Pioneer physician dies after brief illness- here since 1905. Dr H. D. Weaver.* [2020-225-SP-1942-09-14]

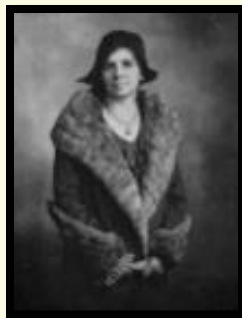
Results: Provenance



Document Search: 1954 Saskatoon Star Phoenix Archives

Provenance:

- *1954 Article on death of Alice Weaver, wife of Mrs H. D. Weaver provides information that the medicine chest may have come from this estate as both had passed in 1956 when it was recorded to have been presented to USask*
- *Only relative in SK, nephew of Alice Weaver Dr Herbert Thomas, SK provincial archivist, may have facilitated this donation*



Saskatoon Star Phoenix. (1954, November 29). *Mrs. H. D. Weaver dies in Halifax.*

— [2020-225-SP-1954-11-29]

Results: Provenance



Document Search: Saskatoon Star Phoenix Archives

Provenance:

Only relative in SK, nephew of Alice Weaver Dr Herbert Thomas, SK provincial archivist, may have facilitated this donation to USask in 1956 as both Dr & Mrs Weaver were deceased by them

Dr. Lewis Herbert Thomas (1917-1982).

- SK Provincial Archivist,
- Nephew of Alice Weaver



**Dr. Lewis Herbert Thomas
(1917-1982).**

National Archives. (n.d.). *Lewis Herbert Thomas* (by Mark Vajcner).

[https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/postcards-from-the-past/lewis-herbert-thomas /](https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/postcards-from-the-past/lewis-herbert-thomas/)

Results: Provenance



U. of S. Archives, Nursing, found in 2008

Former Dean, and Emeritus Professor, Yvonne Brown (1940-2016) and Former Assistant Dean & Emeritus Professor Barb Smith found the following validating evidence when searching the College of Nursing Archives for their 2008 book *'70 years of nursing education 1938-2008 at the University of Saskatchewan*:

During our days in the University Archives, one of the more interesting "ah ha" moments came when we discovered a series of three items that confirmed the origins of Florence's Nightingale's Medicine Chest, located in a display case in the Health Science's Library. (Brown et al., 2008, p. 195).

IV B 3, memos and letters re Florence Nightingale's Medicine Chest.

1961. U. of S. Archives. Nursing IV B 3 #1.

1974. U. of S. Archives. Nursing IV B 3 #2.

1980. U. of S. Archives. Nursing IV B 3 #3.

Brown, Y. M. R., Smith, B. L., & Brown, F. B. (2008). *70 years of nursing education 1938-2008 at the University of Saskatchewan* (Ch. 9, p. 195). College of Nursing, University of Saskatchewan. Saskatoon, SK., Canada.

1961 Results: Provenance



U. of S. Archives, Nursing **June 22, 1961**

1961. U. of S. Archives. Nursing IV B 3 #1.

Memos and letters re Florence Nightingale's Medicine Chest

- A hand-written letter dated June 22, 1961 to Miss Keeler (Director of Nursing) provided additional information:

"I came across the information regarding F. Nightingale's case. Lady Verney gave it to Mr. I Milson. Mr. Milsom gave it to Dr. Weaver. Mr. Milsom was Florence Nightingales gardener, and then her sister's gardener (Lady Verney). Mr. Milsom came to Saskatoon to do landscaping for the city....This is all I know".

Jean W.

The letter was signed "Jean W." (Brown et al., 2008, p. 195).

Brown, Y. M. R., Smith, B. L., & Brown, F. B. (2008). *70 years of nursing education 1938-2008 at the University of Saskatchewan* (Ch. 9, p. 195). College of Nursing, University of Saskatchewan. Saskatoon, SK., Canada.

1974 Results: Provenance



U. of S. Archives, Nursing 1974

1974. U. of S. Archives. Nursing IV B 3 #2.

Memos and letters re Florence Nightingale's Medicine Chest

A document in 1974 reads:

"The chest was given to Dr. and Mrs Weaver by a former Saskatoon resident, Mr. Milson who was a close friend of Florence Nightingale's sister"

(Brown et al., 2008, p. 195).

Brown, Y. M. R., Smith, B. L., & Brown, F. B. (2008). *70 years of nursing education 1938-2008 at the University of Saskatchewan* (Ch. 9, p. 195). College of Nursing, University of Saskatchewan. Saskatoon, SK., Canada.

1980 Results: Provenance



U. of S. Archives, Nursing

1980. U. of S. Archives. Nursing IV B 3 #3.

Memos and letters re Florence Nightingale's Medicine Chest

In 1980, a memo from the College of Nursing's Administrative Assistant to the University Archivist stated:

"the chest was handed over to the College of Nursing a few years ago and is now in a display case in the Health Science Library" (Brown et al., 2008, p. 195).

Brown, Y. M. R., Smith, B. L., & Brown, F. B. (2008). *70 years of nursing education 1938-2008 at the University of Saskatchewan* (Ch. 9, p. 195). College of Nursing, University of Saskatchewan. Saskatoon, SK., Canada.

1985 Results: Provenance



1985 University of Saskatchewan- Archives

COLLEGE OF NURSING

4.42 College of Nursing

4.42.1 Brief Statement of Collections

A report prepared in 1978 by the Council Museum Committee states that the collection includes a medicine chest of Florence Nightingale's, a slide projector which belonged to Dr. Lindsey (Dean of Medical Sciences in the 1950s), a collection of slides on the history of nursing prepared by Hazel Keller, and a bust of Jeanne Mance (the first "lay nurse" in Canada) from the Grey Nun's Hospital in Regina (UoS, 1985).

4.42.2 Display(s) Size, Nature, Location

Florence Nightingale's Medicine Chest is in a plexiglass cube display in the Health Science Library on the second floor (UoS, 1985).

4.42.5 Potential for Thematic Development

See #4.42.6 (UoS, 1985).

1985 University of Saskatchewan- Archives

University of Saskatchewan. (1985, February 28). *Collections analysis and museum feasibility study*. Presented to Blaine A. Holmlund, Vice President (Special Projects) by Terrence Heath, S. Louise Jones and Tim E. H. Jones.

1985: Results: Provenance



1985 University of Saskatchewan- Archives (cont.)

COLLEGE OF NURSING (cont.)

4.42.6 Potential for Collection and/or Display Development

The Nightingale chest is probably of considerable monetary value, since it belonged to one of the major modern figures in the history of medical care. It could perhaps be used as a focus or jumping-off point for a discussion of the leading role Saskatchewan played in the development and delivery of some of the world's first universal medical treatment and screening programs, especially for tuberculosis and cancer. This theme could be developed using the information from such other departments as Social and Preventive Medicine, the Division of Oncology, and the School of Physical Therapy. (UoS, 1985).

Another, secondary, use of this rather unexpected and spectacular artifact would be to describe how it came to rest in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan (UoS, 1985).

1985 University of Saskatchewan- Archives

University of Saskatchewan. (1985, February 28). *Collections analysis and museum feasibility study*. Presented to Blaine A. Holmlund, Vice President (Special Projects) by Terrence Heath, S. Louise Jones and Tim E. H. Jones.

1985: Results: Provenance



1985 University of Saskatchewan- Archives (cont.)

COLLEGE OF NURSING (cont.)

4.42.7 Needs for Management and/or Development

We do not feel the medicine chest is secure enough from theft, and recommend that it be removed from display or that a more theft-proof display case be constructed for it (UoS, 1985).

4.42.9 Documentation

Museum Committee accession #s 309 (Nightingale medicine chest), 321 (bust).

1985 University of Saskatchewan- Archives

University of Saskatchewan. (1985, February 28). *Collections analysis and museum feasibility study*. Presented to Blaine A. Holmlund, Vice President (Special Projects) by Terrence Heath, S. Louise Jones and Tim E. H. Jones.

Results: Provenance



(McDonald, 2002-2012)

Eight rare volumes of the *Collected Works of Florence Nightingale* (McDonald, 2002-2012) were reviewed to search for any information with regard to the medicine chest:

- when and where purchased;
- its use during the Crimean War;
- the gift transfer by Nightingale's sister Lady Verney to friends - her gardener Mr. I. Milsom

McDonald, L. (Ed.) (2002, February–2012, December). *Collected Works of Florence Nightingale*, Volume 1–16. Wilifred Laurier University Press. 8/16 selected

<https://www.wlupress.wlu.ca/Books/C/Collected-Works-of-Florence-Nightingale>

- 2003 Vol 5– Florence Nightingale on society, politics, philosophy, science, education, literature.
- 2005 Vol 8– Florence Nightingale on women, medicine, midwifery and prostitution.
- 2008 Vol 11– Florence Nightingale's suggestions for thought.
- 2009 Vol 12– Florence Nightingale: The Nightingale School.
- 2009 Vol 13– Florence Nightingale: Extending nursing.
- **2010 Vol 14– Florence Nightingale: The Crimean War.**
- 2011 Vol 15– Florence Nightingale on wars and the war office.
- 2012 Vol 16– Florence Nightingale and hospital reform.

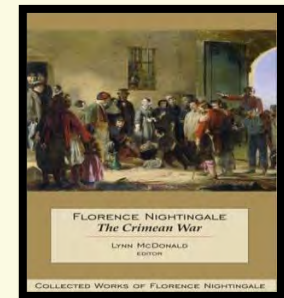
Results: Provenance



McDonald, L. (Ed.), (2010). Vol 14

Florence Nightingale: The Crimean War.

- ☐ Medical science was little developed at the time of the Crimea war .
- ☐ Chloroform had only just come into use; anesthetics were in general considered risky.
- ☐ Death rate for amputations was roughly 50%.
- ☐ Soap was not supplied until late 1855; basic handwashing ignored.
- ☐ The great bowel diseases that killed and weakened so many men during the war were cholera (identified only in 1883); diarrhea (1885); and dysentery (1898);
- ☐ Fevers identified by their symptoms (low, continued, remittent, intermittent). Later identifies as Typhoid (identified in 1880); Nightingale's fever brucellosis (identified in 1887); yellow fever 1900, germ fever (1879) (McDonald, 2010, pp. 16-17).
- ❖ No mention of medicine chests.



Results: 2023 Updates to Information card - Based on research findings

Nightingale Medicine Chest

The Florence Nightingale medicine chest is a historical artifact dating back to 1850s. Florence Nightingale, the founder of modern nursing, purchased the medicine chest in England and took 38 volunteer nurses to the Crimean War, reportedly along with this medicine chest, for them to use in caring for wounded soldiers.

Brief History

- 1854–1856** Medicine chest (reportedly) taken with Florence Nightingale to Crimean War
- 1890 (approx.)** Medicine chest given by Lady Verney (sister of Florence Nightingale) to Mr. and Mrs. Isaac Milsom (gardener and friend[s] of both sisters)
- 1912** Medicine chest came with Isaac and Mary Ellen (McNabb) Milsom and family when they immigrated to Canada where Isaac would do landscaping for the City of Saskatoon
- 1918 (approx.)** Medicine chest given by the Milsoms to Dr. Hugh D. and Mrs. Alice (Thomas) Weaver (friends from the Saskatoon Horticultural Society)
- 1956 (approx.)** Medicine chest given from the estate of Dr. and Mrs. H. Weaver to the University of Saskatchewan College of Medicine
- 1974 (approx.)** Medicine chest given to University of Saskatchewan College of Nursing
- 2022–2024** Research began to *Explore the Secrets and Provenance of the Medicine Chest*. This project draws on research supported by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council.



UNIVERSITY OF SASKATCHEWAN

College of Nursing

NURSING.USASK.CA



Social Sciences and Humanities
Research Council of Canada

Conseil de recherches en
sciences humaines du Canada

Canada

QR CODE Learn
more about this
historical nursing
artifact

BE WHAT THE WORLD NEEDS

Results: Provenance



Custodians of the Medicine Chest

NIGHTINGALE, Florence (1820-1910)

- (dob: 1820, May 12 - 1920, August 13) @90y
 - born in Florence, Italy; died in London, England
- VERNEY, Lady Parthenope (Nightingale)** (1819-1890)
- (dob: 1819-April 19 - 1890, May 12) @72y
 - born in Naples, Italy; died in London, England

MILSOM, Isaac (1858-1933)

- (dob: 1858, July 22 - 1933, April 28) @75th year
- born in Didmorton nr Oldbury, Tetbury, Gloucestershire, England;
- died in Philadelphia PA,

MILSOM, Mary Ellen (McNabb) (1861-1917)

- (dob: 1861, August 12-1954, September 13) @55y
- born in Assleagh, Mayo, Ireland; died in Saskatoon, SK, CA

Milson family immigrates to Canada (1912) & 6/7 Children

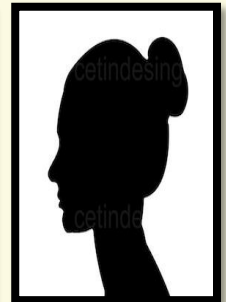
- **2nd oldest son already in Manitoba, Canada**

WEAVER, Dr. Herbert (Hugh) Dutton (1867-1942)

- (dob: 1867, March 12- 1942, September 12) @75y
- Born in Altrincham, Cheshire, England; died in Saskatoon, SK, CA

WEAVER, Alice (Thomas) Weaver (1880-1954)

- (dob: **1880-1954**) @74y
- Born in Stellarton, Nova Scotia, NS; died in Halifax, NS



Results: Provenance



Relatives of Custodians of the Medicine Chest (cont.)

- Milsons and Weavers became friends 1914-1918
- Mary Ellen Milson died in 1917
- Isaac Milson moved to Regina in 1918, then to US in 1921
- Around 1918 Medicine chest passed from Milsons to Weavers
- Dr Weaver died 1942, Mrs Weaver in 1954

THOMAS, Lewis Herbert (1917-1983) (nephew, SK provincial archivist)

- (1917, April 13 - 1983, November 22) @66y
- Born in Saskatoon, SK, died in Regina/Yorkton, SK
- Nephew of Alice Weaver

THOMAS, Margaret Eleanor (1917-2015)

- (1917, June 29 - 2015, May 15) @97y
- Born in Yorkton, SK; died in Ottawa, ON in 2015
- Wife of Lewis Herbert Thomas

1956 - University of Saskatchewan

1974 - College of Nursing

- University of Saskatchewan (1907...)
- University of Saskatchewan/College of Medicine (1926...)
- University of Saskatchewan/College of Nursing (1938...)

(Ancestry.com, 2020; Census of Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta, 2020; Census of England; Census of Ireland, 2020; My Heritage.com 2023)



Results: Archival Search-Provenance



ARCHIVES

City of Saskatoon Archives.

National Archives

Saskatchewan Archives https://search.saskarchives.com/lewis-h-thomas-fonds;rad?sf_culture=en

University of Alberta Archives <https://albertaonrecord.ca/lewis-herbert-thomas-fonds>

University of Saskatchewan

University of Saskatchewan, College of Medicine

University of Saskatchewan, College of Nursing

Country Census

Census of England

Census of Ireland

Census of Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta. (1916).

Genealogy Databases

Ancestry.com.

My Heritage.com

Obituaries

THOMAS, Margaret Eleanor (1917, June 29–2015, May 15) @ age 97

Wife of Lewis Herbert Thomas (1917-1983)

<https://leaderpost.remembering.ca/obituary/margaret-thomas-1065368130>

Results: Document Search



ARCHIVES

National Archives

National Archives. (n.d.). *Lewis Herbert Thomas* (by Mark Vajcner).

[https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/postcards-from-the-past/lewis-herbert-thomas /](https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/postcards-from-the-past/lewis-herbert-thomas/)

City of Saskatoon Archives

City of Saskatoon Archives. (2020). *Weaver Park, 1954*. Park locations & amenities.

<https://www.google.com/maps/d/viewer?mid=1i2jw1tjUk9ac6QLUug58zbo6bPlSajJd&ll=52.121124559976124,%2C-106.64710741793823&z=13>

University of Saskatchewan- Archives

University of Saskatchewan. (1985, February 28). *Collections analysis and museum feasibility study*. Presented to Blaine A. Holmlund, Vice President (Special Projects) by Terrence Heath, S. Louise Jones and Tim E. H. Jones. 1978 Report about the College of Nursing Medicine Chest. Archives and Special Collections.

University of Saskatchewan- College of Nursing - Archives

University of Saskatchewan- College of Nursing- Archives

IV B 3, Memos and letters re Florence Nightingale's Medicine Chest.

1961. U. of S. Archives. Nursing IV B 3 #1.

1974. U. of S. Archives. Nursing IV B 3 #2.

1980. U. of S. Archives. Nursing IV B 3 #3.

Results: Media News- Provenance



Newspaper – Saskatoon Daily Star/ Saskatoon Star Phoenix

Saskatoon Daily Star. (1914, July 28). *TWO day's flower show this year. Saskatoon Horticultural and Arboricultural Association* (p. 6). (Article links Dr. H. Weaver's name with Isaac Milsom).

28 Jul 1914 6 - Star-Phoenix at Newspapers.com.pdf

<https://www.newspapers.com/image/507540440>

Saskatoon Daily Star. (1917, September 15). *Mrs. Milsom had famous friends in old country.*

15 Sep 1917 6 - Star-Phoenix at Newspapers.com.pdf

Saskatoon Star Phoenix. (1918, April). *Isaac Milsom goes to Regina.* [2020-225-SP-1918-00-04].

Saskatoon Star Phoenix. (1933, May 15). *Dead: Capt. Isaac Milsom.* [2020-225-SP-1933-05-15].

Saskatoon Star Phoenix. (1940, January 18). *Advertisement invitation to Nurse's Tea on Friday, Jan 19, 1942.* [2020-225-SSP-1940-01-18]. 20 Jan 1940 8 - Star-Phoenix at Newspapers.com.pdf

Saskatoon Star Phoenix. (1940, January 20). *Exhibit owned by Florence Nightingale at Nurse's Tea Friday: Successful function arranged in aid of Red Cross in Hudson's Bay Company Store attracts many visitors.* The Women's Page (p. 8). [2020-225-SSP-1940-01-20].

<https://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=SCE0ypLQHGcC&dat=19400120&printsec=frontpage&hl=en>

Saskatoon Star Phoenix. (1942, September 14). *Death takes Dr. Weaver: Pioneer physician dies after brief illness- here since 1905. Dr H. D. Weaver.* [2020-225-SP-1942-09-14]

Saskatoon Star Phoenix. (1954, November 29). *Mrs. H. D. Weaver dies in Halifax.* [2020-225-SP-1954-11-29]

Results: Campus News-Provenance



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RESULTS DOCUMENT SEARCH

5. Value

Step 1

A-Questions can be answered through direct observation of the artifact;

Step 2

B-Questions can be answered through-comparisons with similar artifacts;

Step 3

C-Questions asked after supplementary evidence (e.g., printed/written sources) are consulted;

Step 4

D-The formulation of conclusions derived from the preceding questions.

Results - VALUE



Results/Responses to Value Questions

Value

35. The artifact's value to its original producer and/or owner. Its value (if any) to its contemporary society in terms of the cultural values it depicts through observable evidence, comparisons with others like it and supplementary data. Its value as determined by subsequent owners, caretakers, etc.

1. What was the artifact's value to its original owner?
2. Did ownership of this type of artifact reflect the social or economic status of the original owner?
3. What value was placed on the object by society?
4. What cultural values does it reveal?
5. What value does the object have to the society in which it was produced? (extrinsic/monetary)

5. VALUE

Step 1

A-Questions can be answered through direct observation of the artifact;

Results - 5. Value



Results: Value

- The findings of the provenance of the chest reveal many insights about how material objects of importance to women's and nursing history were valued over the last 200 years.

Worth Today

- The Canadian Antique Roadshow is interested in featuring this artifact and putting a value on this historical object at some point.

Results- 5. Value



2022 Canadian Antique Road Show

- Get Free Appraisal?
- Send photos in etc./proof of ownership etc.
- Book for Show?? Check into potential of this later

2024 Canadian Antique Road Show

- Production of this show suspended at this time

5. VALUE

Step 2

B-Questions can be answered through-comparisons with similar artifacts;

\$Value\$ of Medicine Chest

Medicine Chest Owned by Florence Nightingale

Chest Came to Canada in 1912

Allegedly used in Crimean War

Medicine Chest used by Florence Nightingale

Material Wood // English Style

Value- \$9K- \$12K USD*

Because it once belonged to a famous person

Advised to Insure for about- 15K USD*

Regular Chest-Not belonging to Florence Nightingale

\$800-1200 USD.

Jeremiah S226

November 21, 2024

ASK an EXPERT

Contact me directly for your Next Question // w/ the LINK to my Profile*

Click on the Link & Use the- "Ask a Question" Button in the Upper Left*

<https://www.justanswer.com/antiques/expert-jeremiahs226/?rpt=3800>

US Antiques Road Show

Results- 5. Value



2006 CHRISTIES Auction House

Item Name: *A 19th-Century English mahogany domestic medicine chest*

Category: SCIENTIFIC, MEDICAL AND ENGINEERING WORKS OF ART

Live Auction: 4095

Provenance: From the Collection of Dr. Anne Mortimer Young

Price realized: GBP 1,560

Estimate: GBP 1,500 - GBP 1,800

Closed: 12 July 2006,



Christies Auction House. (2006a). *A 19th-Century English mahogany domestic medicine chest.*

<https://www.christies.com/en/lot/lot-4756538>

Results- 5.Value



2006 CHRISTIES Auction House

Item Name: *A Victorian mahogany medicine chest*

Category: SCIENTIFIC, MEDICAL AND ENGINEERING WORKS OF ART

Live Auction: 4095

Provenance:

Price realized: GBP 480

Estimate: GBP 200- GBP 400

Closed: 12 July 2006



Christies Auction House. (2006b). *A Victorian mahogany medicine chest*.
<https://www.christies.com/en/lot/lot-4756539>

Results- 5.Value



2011 CHRISTIES Auction House

Item Name:

Category: CHRISTIES INTERIORS

Live Auction: 3515

Provenance:

Price realized: GBP 600

Estimate: GBP 500-GBP 800

Closed: 14 Dec 2011



Christies Auction House. (2011). *A medicine chest, English, early 19th-century.*
<https://www.christies.com/en/lot/lot-5522667>

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Appraisals (Value)

Canadian Antique Roadshow. Ask appraisers in minutes

CHRISTIES Action House (Value)

Christies Auction House. (2006a). *A 19th-Century English mahogany domestic medicine chest.*

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- Vol 5– Florence Nightingale on society, politics, philosophy, science, education, literature.
 - Vol 8– Florence Nightingale on women, medicine, midwifery and prostitution.
 - Vol 11– Florence Nightingale's suggestions for thought.
 - Vol 12– Florence Nightingale: The Nightingale School.
 - Vol 13– Florence Nightingale: Extending nursing.
 - Vol 14– Florence Nightingale: The Crimean War.
 - Vol 15–Florence Nightingale on wars and the war office.
 - Vol 16– Florence Nightingale and hospital reform.

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<https://www.wlupress.wlu.ca/Books/C/Collected-Works-of-Florence-Nightingale>

- 2003 Vol 5– Florence Nightingale on society, politics, philosophy, science, education, literature.
- 2005 Vol 8– Florence Nightingale on women, medicine, midwifery and prostitution.
- 2008 Vol 11– Florence Nightingale’s suggestions for thought.
- 2009 Vol 12– Florence Nightingale: The Nightingale School.
- 2009 Vol 13– Florence Nightingale: Extending nursing.
- 2010 Vol 14– Florence Nightingale: The Crimean War.
- 2011 Vol 15–Florence Nightingale on wars and the war office.
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Results: Document Search



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Pearce, S. (Ed.) (1994). *Interpreting objects and collections*. Leicester Readers in Museum Studies. Routledge.

https://www.academia.edu/7894796/Interpreting_Objects_and_Collections?email_work_card=reading-history

This volume brings together for the first time the most significant papers on the interpretation of objects and collections and examines how people relate to material culture and why they collect things.

References: Publication



2021

Kent-Wilkinson, A. (2021, May 26). Where in the world is the Florence Nightingale medicine chest? *International Nursing Review*, 68(2), 166–171.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/inr.12678>

<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/epdf/10.1111/inr.12678>

- A recent article entitled “Where in the world is the Florence Nightingale Medicine Chest?” (Kent-Wilkinson, 2021) was published to provide a background history about Florence Nightingale, her life and achievements and some initial questions about how this medicine chest ended up in Saskatoon, SK of all other more likely locations in the world.

Secrets of the Medicine Chest



RESULTS
QUALITATIVE INTERVIEWS



**Interviews with Descendant(s)
of the Milsoms, Weavers/Thomas Families
and Oral History from Emeritus Faculty**

Participant Descendant Search
Interview Questions
Findings
Conclusions

RESULTS QUALITATIVE INTERVIEWS



Interview(s) with Descendant(s) of the Dr. Lewis & Eleanor Thomas

children (brother & sister) of Dr. Lewis & Eleanor Thomas
Jean Thomas (1948-) and Robert Thomas (1850-)



Jean Thomas (76)
Ottawa, ON



Robert Thomas (74)
Victoria, BC

Findings-Qualitative Interviews



Oral Interviews with the children (brother & sister) of Dr. Lewis & Eleanor Thomas

Jean Thomas (1948-) and Robert Thomas (1850-)

1. Robert Thomas confirmed that his father Dr. Lewis Thomas (nephew of Alice Weaver) handled the estate after his great aunt died in 1954.
2. When Robert was about 6 years old he recalls his father brought home the medicine chest for a few days to their home in Regina; this was just before it was donated to USask. He remembers it sitting on the coffee table in the living room. In reflection he recalls vividly how the top cabinet doors open and the green cubicle/compartments inside.
3. Jean his older sister states she did not recall the medicine chest but their parents often told them about Florence Nightingale and that there was some connection in their family history.
4. Robert provided us with many pictures from the family album (1) (Dr. H.D. Weaver - original of the photo in the Star Phoenix (2) photo of Alice Weaver (did not have before), (3) Photo & address of the Weavers 2nd home in Saskatoon (4) photo & Address of their family home in Regina where they grew up with parents Dr Lewis & Eleanor Thomas.
5. Of interest, Jean mentioned that their next-door neighbor in Regina was Tommy Douglas who was often over to their house in those early years

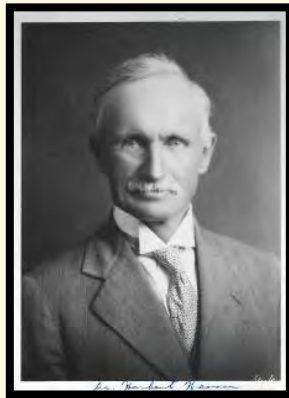
Pictures from Thomas Family Album (sent by Robert Thomas)



Parents: Eleanor & Lewis Thomas



Thomas family home in Regina



Great Aunt Alice & Uncle Hal Weaver



Weaver's 2nd home in Saskatoon

2024, August-Sept

Interviews with descendants of Custodians
of the Medicine Chest
(Leegay Jagoe & Arlene K-W)

August 23, 2024 - Jean Thomas
September 4, 2024 - Robert & Jean Thomas



Jean (76)

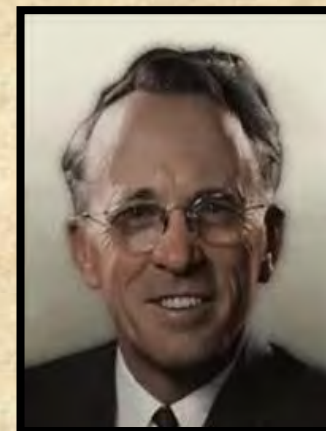


Robert 74)





2024 Street View of Angus Cres



Tommy Douglas



**c. 1950s Thomas Home in Regina
227 Angus Cres, Regina, SK**



**Tommy Douglas Home
217 Angus Cres. Regina, SK**

Interview Questions



Research Questions for descendants of (Isaac Milsom (1858-1933) and Mary Ellen (nee McNabb) Milsom (1861-1917).

1. What relationship are you to: Mr. and Mrs. I. Milsom/ **Lewis Herbert Thomas/nephew of Alice Weaver?**
2. Do you remember hearing anything about the Florence Nightingale Medicine Chest?
3. What family history do you know about Mr. & Mrs. I. Milsom?
4. Do you know what their relationship was to Florence Nightingale and her sister, Lady Verney?
5. What education/training did Isaac Milsom have in horticulture/landscaping /gardening in Ireland or England?
6. What education did Mary Ellen Milsom have in Ireland and/or England?
7. Do you know how Isaac Milsom came to get a position at Clayton House as head gardener?
8. Did the family know the Nightingale sisters? Family/Friend Connection if any?
9. Job Add/ Recruitment?
10. Mr. and Mrs. I. Milsom were at Clayton House from 1890 to 1912 (Lady Verney died in 1890 and Florence Nightingale in 1910). Was there any family history passed down about why they decided to immigrate to Canada in 1912?
11. Why did they decide to come to Saskatoon? Was there a job offer/recruitment- did they know anyone here in the city then of about 5000 people? Did Isaac Milsom have a job when he arrived with wife Mary Ellen and their seven children?
12. Do you know the addresses of where they lived in Saskatoon?
13. Do you know when and why the Milsoms gave the Florence Nightingale Medicine Chest to Dr. H.D. Weaver?
14. An article from 1917 in the *Daily Star* indicates Mary Ellen Milsom was a close confidant of Florence Nightingale. Can you elaborate/confirm/explain further?

Interview Questions



Research Questions (cont.)

15. Mr. Isaac Milsom went to Regina around 1918 to train war vets on reforestation. Soon after he went to Philadelphia to work. Do you know if he was recruited there? What was his position?
16. Did any of the Milsom children move to the United States (Philadelphia)?
17. Of the Milsom's seven children – can you tell me anything about them and their descendants? (such as, where they lived/live, worked/work, children, etc.).
18. Is there a family historian or anyone else that would know the family history that we can also talk to? *[*please note the recorder will be turned off before we ask this question]*
19. Where are you living now (city/street)? Where do/did your parents live? *[*please note the recorder will be turned off before we ask this question]*
20. Any Family Pictures we can scan of Milsoms – yourself as ?? descendant of ...

Interview Questions



Interview Questions for descendants of Lewis Herbert Thomas PhD (1917–1983)

1. What is your relationship to **Lewis Herbert Thomas**?
2. Where are you currently living (city location)? [**please note the recorder will be turned off before we ask this question*]
3. Do you know of any family history passed down (verbal or written) about the Florence Nightingale Medicine Chest?
4. If so, what information was passed down verbally?
5. Was anything written in family journals, letters, family bible, etc. about the Florence Nightingale Medicine Chest?
6. What do you know about the work of **Lewis Herbert Thomas PhD (1917–1983)** and Dr H.D. and Mrs. Weaver as pioneers in early Saskatoon history?
7. Are there any other members of your family that may have information of this? [**please note the recorder will be turned off before we ask this question*]

Interview Questions



Interview Questions for Retired or Emeritus Faculty

1. What was the year timeframe that you attended College of Nursing, USask as a student?
2. What was the year timeframe that you were on faculty at the College of Nursing?
3. When did you first remember hearing about the FNMC.
4. What did you hear about it and from whom?
5. When did you first remember seeing the medicine chest
6. Where was the Florence Nightingale Medicine chest located?

Methodology - Material History (cont.)



Data Analysis: (cont.)

- The analysis of the provenance of the chest may reveal many insights about how material objects of importance to women's and nursing history are valued.
- The Canadian Antique Roadshow is interested in featuring this artifact and putting a value on this historical object at some point.

Significance of Research



Originality and Significance:

Now that the Nightingale's medicine chest is considered a research project, the pilot research will:

- Begin to establish the medicine chest as an artifact itself,
- The monetary value considering the historical significance,
- Evidence-based documentation will strengthen the claim of validity to the original owner for the key stakeholders:
 - College of Nursing;
 - University Archives and Special Collections;
 - USask Library.

Significance of Research (cont.)



Expected Contribution to Knowledge:

The material historian is primarily interested in:

- What an artifact can reveal about the culture that produced it (Elliot et al., 1994).
- The time period in which the chest travelled from one country to another can give us a lot of insight into the social norms and conditions of each period.

Recognizing the global influence of Florence Nightingale, the timeline will parallel:

- The origins of nursing as a profession separate from medicine, and
- The changing status of women, science, and society through wars and pandemics.

Significance of Research (cont.)



Expected Contribution to Knowledge: (cont.)

Medications used in the medicine chest can tell us:

- Limitations in treating infections, and
- Common ailments at that time (early 1850s)

Understanding how nursing, women, and possessions of women were valued, and by whom will:

- Serve to illuminate why the documented gift transfers of the medicine chest went to men in the family, and
- Then initially to the College of Medicine.

Knowledge Mobilization (Past)



Evidence on Past Knowledge Mobilization Activities:

- Newspaper articles over the years have provided a specific level of credibility as to who the custodians were in early city of Saskatoon history (Saskatoon Daily Star, 1914, 1917; Saskatoon Star Phoenix, 1918, 1933, 1940).
- Media news (CKOM Radio, 2020).

Despite lack of research on its validity, in recent years, the University has kept the story alive, through these sources:

- University archives;
- Campus News, USask, by periodic articles by Jim Shewaga (2009, 2020);
- College of Nursing News; By Kylie Kelso, Senior Marketing and Communications Specialist (2021, 2022, 2023).

Knowledge Mobilization (Present)



Audiences:

- General public (local, national, international);
- Nurses and other health professionals;
- Variety of historians such as Nightingale scholars and biographers, but also historians of Victorian society, war, pandemics, public health, and women's issues.



Knowledge Mobilization (cont.)



Dissemination of Results:

Academic dissemination

- Peer-reviewed publications;
- Conference presentations.

Societal dissemination

- Media stories in local newspapers;
- Local history magazines
- Historical report to stakeholders (USask, Special Collections & Archives);
- Historical societies (e.g., Florence Nightingale Historical Society, and Crimean War Society).



Knowledge Mobilization (cont.)



Future Dissemination Plans:

- The Florence Nightingale Museum (FNM) (2022), in London, England has a smaller medicine chest (box) also claimed to have been taken to the Crimea by Nightingale; and because she took 38 volunteer nurses with her, it is highly likely that more than one medicine chest exists.
- The PA (PI) and CoA (CoPI) have recently been in Zoom communication with David Green (Director) and Hannah Smith (Site and Collection Coordinator) of the FNM. Discussions of the potential for collaborative projects around this medicine chest have begun.

Knowledge Mobilization (cont.)



Future Dissemination Plans: (cont.)

Once the authenticity of the chest is established through research, plans are to create:

- Memorabilia and a digital exhibit or web page;
- Include webpage on both the CoN website and on the FNM website);
- Explore the feasibility of a loan of the medicine chest at USask to the FNM for specific periods of time.

To disseminate the existence of the medicine chest in Canada and its unique journey over the last 200 years.



Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI)

Project Design:

- Women in historical context/research is the main EDI focus of this project. The unique journey and history of the medicine chest parallels societal norms, the status of women and nursing as a profession for the last two hundred years.



Research Team



Principal Investigator (PI)/Principal Applicant (PA):

- Arlene Kent-Wilkinson RN, CPMHN(c), PhD has clinical expertise and experience in pioneering specialty course development, i.e., recognized as a global pioneer in developing forensic nursing courses for classroom beginning in 1995 and online starting in 1997. Arlene has been the PI for research projects in her specialty areas of interest (mentally disordered offenders; student study abroad; assessing & dx for dementia in persons in custody at RPC, etc.). Dr. Kent-Wilkinson was the lead for all elements of this project.



Research Team (cont.)



CO-Principal Investigator (CO-PI)/Co-Applicant (CO-A):

- Helen Vandenberg RN, PhD is a nursing historian and has expertise and experience in health systems, hospital, and nursing history research. Her program of research focuses on the history of hospitals during the early twentieth century. Dr. Vandenberg, has experience mentoring students in historical methodology.



Research Team (cont.)



Overall Approach & Skillset of RA:

- The RA will be mentored to the material methodology described in this study. The RA will learn how to engage in historical analysis, and be assisted to gain research, writing, analysis and dissemination skills. Guidance will be provided at each step of the process.

Research Assistant (RA) 2022

- Letitia Johnson PhD(c) History, USask
- Department of History



Research Assistant (RA) 2024

- Leegay Jagoe PhD(c) Nursing
- College of Nursing



Future



- The years go by and sometime we forget we even have this historic relic, 'our best kept secret'!
- Perhaps our medicine chest should be more visible to others. Plans underway to design a wall display case in A Corridor of Health Sciences
- Perhaps our medicine chest was meant to keep traveling around the world as a traveling exhibit on loan to museums so that more nurses can see and appreciate this historical relic of nursing's most famous member

Current/Future Perspectives



Nightingale Medicine Chest can teach us and trace:

- 19th century illnesses & medication
- Pharmaceutical history
- Social history women: status/value of women's possessions
- Social history perspective

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Carpentry, USask

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• Breanna Pochipinski, Mark Tomtene, Shiv Adapa

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