

Florence Beal Bolte

Willows Maternity Home Collection (SC198)

Introduction

This collection contains items relating to the Willows Maternity Home, which operated at 2929 Main in Kansas City, Missouri from 1905 to 1969. Also known as the Willows Maternity Sanitarium or the Willows Maternity Hospital, the institution served as an adoption service and private, temporary home for unwed mothers.

Descriptive Summary

Creator: Florence Beal Bolte

Title: Florence Beal Bolte Willows Maternity Home Collection

Dates: 1915-1930 and n.d.

Size: .21 linear feet, 1 box

Collection Number: SC198

Donor Information

Gift, 2016, Natalie Richards.

Citation Note

Florence Beal Bolte Willows Maternity Home Collection (SC198), Missouri Valley Special Collections, Kansas City Public Library, Kansas City, Missouri.

Administrative Information

Related Collections: Additional items and information relating to The Willows Maternity Home may be found in the library catalog and in Missouri Valley Special Collections local history collections. These include the Vertical File: Hospitals—Willows and the Mrs. Sam Ray Postcard Collection (SC58).

Historical Sketch

The Willows Maternity Home (originally called the Willows Maternity Sanitarium) was founded by Edwin and Cora May Haworth in 1905 and operated out of their home at 2929 Main Street in Kansas City, Missouri. The institution served as a private refuge for unmarried, pregnant women and as an adoption service for their newborn babies. The central location of the Willows made it a convenient and popular home for patients, and Kansas City was soon regarded as an adoption hub.

While the Willows solicited patients throughout the United States, admission was restricted to young women of high social standing and contingent upon the recommendation of a trusted physician. Patients remained at the Willows for up to

eight months, and their identities were kept private due to the social mores of the time.

After 64 years in operation and 25,000-35,000 adoptions, the Willows closed its doors in 1969. In keeping with its strict code of confidentiality, its records were reportedly destroyed.

Scope and Content Note

This collection contains materials related to the Willows Maternity Home collected by employee Florence Beal Bolte during the years 1915-1930. Items in this collection include records of the nursing staff's alumnae association, Willows publications, scrapbook pages and photographs of nurses and infant patients. Please note that this collection does not contain records of mothers admitted to Willows. The collection has been arranged into three series by subject or item type, and therein chronologically.

Series #1: Alumnae Association, 1916 – 1930

This series contains records and correspondence concerning Willows Maternity Hospital Training School alumnae, including the constitution and by-laws of the nurses' official alumnae association.

Series #2: Miscellaneous, 1916 - ca. 1920s and n.d.

This series contains miscellaneous items, including two publications distributed by the Willows Maternity Home, an infant's stocking cap, and informational notes written by the collection donor.

Series #3: Photographs, 1915 - 1918 and n.d.

This series contains scrapbook album photographs of Willows nurses and of children awaiting adoption. Photographs of nurses are identified by last name while most children are identified by first name (see index.) Please note that some album pages have been disassembled. To view these pages in their original form, see the photocopies in folder 9.

Collection Inventory

Series #1: Alumnae Association, 1916 - 1930

- f. 1 Nurses graduation announcement and business cards, 1916
- f. 2 Willows Hospital Alumni officers and by-laws, 1925
- f. 3 Alumnae Association constitution, 1930
- f. 4 Alumnae correspondence, 1930

Series #2: Miscellaneous, 1916 - ca. 1920s and n.d.

- f. 5 The Willows Magazine, 1916

- f. 6 Summer Views in the Willows Maternity Sanitarium, ca. 1920s
- f. 7 Infant stocking cap, n.d.
- f. 8 Notes from collection donor, n.d.

Series #3: Photographs, 1915 - 1918 and n.d.

- f. 9 Photocopies of album pages [see f. 10-11 for originals], 1915-1918 and n.d.
- f. 10 Scrapbook album pages – infants and nurses, 1915-1918 and n.d.
- f. 11 Scrapbook album pages – infants and nurses, 1915-1918 and n.d.
- f. 12 Photograph of Florence Beal Bolte and unknown baby, n.d.

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