

Kaiser Foundation School of Nursing highlighted in Oakland history

By Lincoln Cushing, Heritage writer

In early 2014, Kaiser Permanente will open its rebuilt and expanded Oakland Medical Center in Oakland, Calif. One of the many features of the flagship facility will be high-tech displays highlighting Kaiser Permanente's history, including the contributions of the Kaiser Foundation School of Nursing.

The nursing school display case will include a nurse uniform and cap, photographs, a yearbook, and other memorabilia. More nursing school history will be shown virtually in an adjacent interactive digital screen.

It's particularly fitting to commemorate the school and its graduates at the Oakland site because the new facility campus encompasses the site of the old hotel that served as the school for nearly 30 years.

At the end of World War II when the health plan opened to the public, qualified nurses were in short supply. Kaiser Foundation established the nursing school in 1947 to train more nurses and help alleviate the shortage.

With approval from the California Board of Nurse Examiners, Henry J. Kaiser and founding physician Sidney Garfield, MD, purchased the Piedmont Hotel at 3451 Piedmont, a block away from the hospital.

The site was across the street from the Albert Brown Mortuary, and by the mid-1960s the school nested in the shadow of bustling elevated Interstate 580.

The accredited Permanente School of Nursing graduated its first class in 1950 and offered tuition-free education and training for its first seven years. In 1953 the name of the school was changed to Kaiser Foundation School of Nursing and it became an independent institution. The last class graduated in 1976.

During its existence the school produced 1,065 nurses and boasted numerous accomplishments. It trained a diverse pool of highly skilled nurses, and student scores in State Board Examinations consistently ranked in the top three of all California programs, including university schools.

For a more complete history see **Kaiser Foundation School of Nursing history**.

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