

Ida Patterson

Legacy: Pioneering in the field of nursing

In 1894, Ida Patterson was among the first to study nursing at Fort Collins Hospital, the private hospital at Mathews and Olive streets. Up until the end of the 19th century, nurses had mostly been confined to doing the dirty work of patient care—doing laundry, making beds, scrubbing surfaces, tending to patients' basic needs—but thanks to the influence and advocacy of Florence Nightingale and Clara Barton, doctors began to see the value of training nurses to assist in treating patients. This required educating them in anatomy and other sciences as well as treatments of disease and wounds. It would be several decades before nursing became the highly specialized field of medical care that it is today, but Ida was a pioneer in that new field.

Physicians trained the nurses in a wide range of medical procedures. Nursing was all-encompassing at that time, with nurses assisting during surgery, administering anesthesia, giving injections and doing other tasks doctors had previously done. Ida was the first of two nurses trained at the hospital, where she worked until marrying Charles Farwell in 1899 and moving to Canada.

In 1925, the public, nonprofit Larimer County Hospital superseded the small private hospitals established by local physicians.

Written by Melissa Allbrandt, Archivist, Editor, and Writer