

Collection #
BV 4978–BV 4979

MARY JANE LEAK
SCRAPBOOKS, CA. 1917–1989

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Processed by

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COLLECTION INFORMATION

VOLUME OF
COLLECTION: 2 bound volumes

COLLECTION
DATES: ca. 1917–89

PROVENANCE: Jo Ann Eli, Danville, Virginia

RESTRICTIONS: None

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ACCESSION
NUMBER: 2001.0823

NOTES:

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Mary Jane Leak was born in 1899 in Lizton, Hendricks County, Indiana to Fannie Leach Leak (1874-1966) and Ora Elmer Leak (1868–1945), a farmer who later specialized in chickens. She was the youngest of four daughters: Elsie, Sarah, Ruth, and Mary Jane. In 1921 she graduated from the Methodist Episcopal Hospital (now Methodist Hospital of Indiana) School for Nurses.

Her life over the next few decades was peripatetic and eventful, encompassing a variety of nursing jobs and specializations. Following graduation, she and her sister Sarah, also a nurse, moved to Rochester, Minnesota to work at the Mayo Clinic. Feeling called to public health nursing, however, Leak returned to Indiana after a short time and worked as a public health nurse on the west side of Indianapolis. Early in 1923 she and her friend Mary Frances Morris moved to Boston, where she found employment at the Boston Children's Hospital. Between 1924 and 1927, she served as a Red Cross nurse in Aurora, Indiana, where she became involved in relief efforts following the Flood of 1927. In 1930, she attended a summer course in School Nursing at Peabody College in Nashville, Tennessee, and the following year she began graduate studies in Public Health Nursing at Vanderbilt. For much of the 1930s she worked as a public health nurse in Sumner and Knox Counties, Tennessee. 1937 was a busy year for Leak; she took part in Memphis flood relief efforts on behalf of the Red Cross, attended a summer course in Teaching Home Nursing at UCLA, and worked in Clark County and New Albany, Indiana. In 1939 she completed a short course in Venereal Disease Control at Louisiana State, which contributed to her 1941 hiring as Advisory Nurse for the Alabama State Health Department's Division of Venereal Disease.

By 1943 Leak had joined the Army as a nurse, a position she kept through the end of the Second World War in 1945. Serving in the European Theater, she passed through Scotland, England, France, and Switzerland.

After the war, Leak earned a Bachelor of Science degree in 1947, followed by a Master of Science degree from Indiana University in 1951. She also authored the textbook *A Manual of Simple Nursing Procedures*.

Mary Jane Leak retired in Kalispell, Montana, where she died in 1999.

Sources:

Collection Materials

Indiana Birth, Marriage and Death Records

United States Census Records

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

These two scrapbooks, compiled by Mary Jane Leak, hold numerous mementoes, photographs, cards, telegrams, and other materials pertaining to her life between approximately 1917 and the end of WWII. Based on the inscription at the beginning of the first book—noting that it was a gift from the Camp Fire Girls—she did not begin organizing the materials until at least 1930. She also added many explanatory notes in later years, discussing her jobs, friends, and the various locations in which she lived.

Most of the materials relate to Leak's nursing career. These include commencement booklets, photographs of fellow nurses, and images of the hospitals or areas in which she worked. Especially prominent are a series of photographs of Methodist Hospital student nurses and staff in the early 1920s—in the cafeteria, in the lab, performing surgery, and so on. Some are posed, while others appear candid.

The rest of the materials are mementoes of travels and daily life, such as theater programs, Democratic Party political leaflets, and a few letters from friends and family. There are also numerous tourist maps and leaflets that she gathered during her tour of duty in Europe, and an envelope containing a leaf from William Shakespeare's garden in Stratford-upon-Avon, England. Any horrific scenes she may have witnessed during the war are not mentioned in the scrapbooks.

Leak appears to have been good-humored, dedicated to her profession, and constantly seeking new knowledge and places. Her scrapbooks provide an intimate look at the life of an independent, career-minded young woman at a time in which most women were not employed outside the home. They would also be useful to researchers looking into the nursing program or general appearance of Methodist Hospital in the early 1920s.

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Mary Jane Leak Scrapbook, vol. 1, ca. 1917–89

Mary Jane Leak Scrapbook, vol. 2, ca. 1931–89

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CATALOGING INFORMATION

For additional information on this collection, including a list of subject headings that may lead you to related materials:

1. Go to the Indiana Historical Society's online catalog:
<http://opac.indianahistory.org/>
2. Click on the "Basic Search" icon.
3. Select "Call Number" from the "Search In:" box.
4. Search for the collection by its basic call number (in this case, BV 4978 or BV 4979).
5. When you find the collection, go to the "Full Record" screen for a list of headings that can be searched for related materials.