

Title: The Leadership Story of Linda Richards: America's First Trained Nurse

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Nursing historians have traditionally approached the topic of leadership by focusing on nursing's more widely known leaders, leaders such as Florence Nightingale and Isabel Hampton Robb. Absent from the literature are accounts of lesser known, but no less important leaders. Using the methodology of historical analysis, this dissertation redresses this omission by creating a leadership profile of Linda Richards, America's first trained nurse.

Guiding the inquiry as both methodology and theoretical framework are Howard Gardner's (1995) six constants of leadership: the story, audience, organization, embodiment, indirect and direct leadership, and expertise. Primary documents and relevant secondary sources interpreting Richard's life and the events of the late 19th and early 20th centuries serve as the basis for the analysis.

The facts of Linda Richards's life are first presented in nine successive chronological periods identified by a pivotal event. The challenges of overcoming the perception of nurses as intemperate prostitutes amid the growing opportunities for women following the Civil War serve as the backdrop. Richards's leadership story emerges through her work as a superintendent of hospitals and nurses' training schools in cities that included Boston, New York, Philadelphia, and Kyoto, Japan, as well as her final years devoted to care of the insane.

Analysis of the six constants of leadership that define Richards's leadership reveals a central message imparted to a broad audience of nurses, doctors, students, and patients. Richards's story was three-fold: nursing is an acceptable profession for women, trained nurses are essential, and care of the mentally ill should be an integral part of nurses' training. She delivered her story directly by embodying the role of the nurse within the newly formed organizations that defined nursing in America.

Emerging from the leadership story is the story of the fledgling profession of nursing. Richards's leadership profile brings into focus the influence of two struggles: one for women's rights and the other to distinguish nursing as a profession, rather than as a calling. Her message to postmodern nurses facing longstanding issues related to education, ethics, and nursing shortages is timeless: continue to work towards excellence and unity of the profession.