



*Exeter Hospital
Volunteers
A Journey Through
History*

1910-2010

The Beginning of “The Guild”

“.....In late 1909, some ladies in the community decided that perhaps they needed to organize the activities of groups in town who were assisting the hospital. The very first Exeter Hospital Guild secretary’s report tells us that on January 25, 1910, six ladies met at the home of Miss Lucy B. Getchell and organized the Exeter Hospital Guild for the purpose of aiding the Ways and Means Committee (of Exeter Hospital) in any way possible, particularly in providing linens and other necessities.

The ladies present at the meeting were Miss Getchell, President; Mrs. Joseph W. Merrill, Vice-president; Mrs. A.S. Wetherell, Treasurer and Secretary pro-tem; Mrs. Robert Mason, Mrs. Winthrop Fiske and Miss Jessie Fort—Executive Committee. Miss Getchell was elected chairman of the Lookout Committee with the privilege of adding to her committee; Mrs. Fiske and Mrs. Wetherell, aids.”

It was voted to ask about eighty ladies whose names were presented to join and the yearly dues were fixed at fifty cents. The first meeting to be held at Mrs. Cotton’s on February second and to take the form of a tea. It was also voted to authorize Mrs. Mason to buy a cut-of-cloth and patterns and begin work at once. Thus began the Exeter Hospital Guild.

Some of the items sewn by the Guild in these first few months were fifty body swathes, forty diapers, forty-four night shirts, fifty pillow cases, twelve operating gowns, twenty-four baby blankets, eight washcloths, thirty-four nightgowns, forty doctor’s towels, thirty glass towels, twenty four kitchen towels, fifty curtains, thirty-three sheets and many other articles totaling over five hundred! The price of a yard of cloth in 1910 was recorded as being eight cents!!!



The Exeter Cottage Hospital

In the year 1910, the Exeter Cottage Hospital treated two hundred eighty-two patients of whom two hundred and seventy-two were admitted.

By 1911, the Hospital Guild was requested by the Trustees of the Hospital to become a permanent organization due to their year of independent and satisfactory work.”

Taken directly from the book Exeter Hospital Auxiliaries, 75 Years of Service by, Margaret K. “Peg” Johnson, Director of Volunteer Services, April 1985

About Miss Lucy B. Getchell

Miss Getchell was born in Exeter, NH October 23, 1850. She was the daughter of Joshua and Lydia (Bennett) Getchell and descends from Samuel Getchell (1617-1697) of England and the Massachusetts Bay Colony. Her parents were from Wells, Maine and moved here in the 1830s. They had a number of children, but only two seem to have survived, John and Lucy. The siblings were 18 years apart in age and Lucy was very close to John's only surviving son, Clarence. She was closer in age to Clarence than to her brother. The family moved around over the years, her former home on Front Street, The Charles D. Towle house, was long headquarters of the Academy fraternity, Alpha Nu. Lucy lived with her parents on High Street until their deaths (Lydia in 1868, Joshua in 1886). She lived with her brother briefly on the corner of Water and Center street and for a while with her nephew Clarence. She also boarded with the Thyng family on Main Street and for a time at Benjamin Swasey's home on Front Street. This house still exists, it is now owned by PEA and is the white house on the right of the Exeter Post office.

The family ran a hardware store downtown in a building that now houses Puddlejumpers and the Chocolatier. It was originally located down the street nearer to the PEA boathouse but the whole building was moved in the 1890s. Lucy ran a millinery shop out of the building, setting up the shop in 1881. The News-Letter ran a piece about it on September 30, 1881:

"Miss Lucy Getchell opened a millinery store in Getchell's Block on Wednesday and makes one of the handsomest exhibitions of goods in her line ever seen in this town.

Her stock seems to have been selected with great care and taste, and some of her novelties are unusually attractive. Miss Getchell's establishment is an ornament to the street, and will doubtless prove a great convenience to the public."

Miss Getchell was an especially prepossessing woman, of many engaging qualities, and her kindly deeds were many. She was a member of the Congregational Church and long a member of Orient Chapter, Order of the Eastern Star. Miss Getchell held posts in homes for the aged in or near Boston and at the Perkins School for the Blind. Miss Lucy B. Getchell died April 12 at the Centennial Home for the Aged in Concord in her 73rd year. The largely attended funeral was held at the lecture room of the Congregational Church, Rev. Dr. James W. Bixler officiating. She is buried in Exeter Cemetery next to her family.



Thank you so much to Miss Lucy B. Getchell and the hundreds of wonderful, kind and generous volunteers who have been part of the Exeter Health Resources community over the past 100 years.

Thank you to the Exeter Historical Society for the information and photos of Miss Lucy B. Getchell Society