

THE WOMEN WHO MADE DICK'S HOUSE

Healing, History and Her Stories



Caitlin Layhe Nugent
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Author's Note

The research for this book began as a search for names and stories. The largely forgotten names and stories of the women whose work, care and dedication have served the Dartmouth community for nearly a century.

Today, Dick's House is viewed as the place to go when you're in-need of medical care and rest. Whilst that is certainly its purpose, it also possesses a rich, deeply-human story that is full of grief, resilience and the largely invisible labor of women.

The heart of Dick's House will forever lie in the women who made it. These women were nurses, administrators, advocates and caregivers. They grappled with campus wide epidemics, formed deep connections with students and held the well-being of the college in their hands, often without recognition.

Through this book, I aim to convey what life was like before Dick's House, how it came to be and share these women's stories. There may be points in which these stories feel unsatisfying and without closure or further details. The gaps in these stories exist for countless reasons; however, many are the result of a long history in which women's work and lives were overlooked and unrecorded.

I have done my best to treat each subject with care and the utmost respect. It was always in the forefront of my mind that these individuals were real people who lived full, complex lives.

In telling their stories, I hope to restore their names, voices and presence so that we can give these women the credit they truly deserve.

- Caitlin Laybe Nugent, Class of 2025

Life Before Dick's House

Operating as a medical professional in rural New Hampshire pre-1920's often meant limited supplies, minimal equipment and no dedicated clinical space. The nearby Mary Hitchcock Memorial Hospital was often understaffed and lacking available beds which left patients no choice but to travel long distances to seek medical attention. Before Dick's House, Dartmouth did not have an equipped formal infirmary or a full-time medical staff. When students found themselves sick or injured, their options for receiving care were limited. If they were suffering from a minor injury or non-contagious illness, students would either stay in their rooms or wait for a doctor to come and see them but even when a physician did arrive, there was little they could do.

During this period in which formal medical facilities were lacking on campus, a student named Ed suffered a brutal injury after he collided with another player mid-tackle. This incident was witnessed by a fellow student at the time, Dr. W.R.P Emerson '1892. Over 30 years later, he could vividly remember the incident; *"I can still hear the thud of the impact...Ed's face was smashed wickedly. The accident might easily have been fatal."*¹

With little medical staff on hand and only *"crude facilities"*² available, Emerson helped Ed search for medical care. By chance, the pair came across a Dr. O'Connor, who *"took a spoon from his pocket and, with its handle, set Ed's nose, picking out the fragments of bone with his fingers."*³ Once they got back to their room, *"a towel wrung out in cold water was the only available remedy."*⁴

By today's standard, this treatment sounds crude, painful and totally absurd but for the time and place, that was the only treatment available. The doctor was simply doing what he could with tools that could be easily found and no proper clinical space to work in.

¹ Clark, Eugene Francis. "Dick's House." *Dartmouth Alumni Magazine*, November 1927, 21, <https://archive.dartmouthalumnimagazine.com/article/1927/11/dicks-house>

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

The Pest House

From 1908, the college had an Isolation Hospital however, it was reserved only for students unlucky enough to be suffering from contagious illnesses such as measles, mumps and chicken pox. This building was known colloquially amongst students as the ***“Pest House”***⁵ on account of it being rundown, uncomfortable and a far cry from a place of comfort and comprehensive care.



Fig. 1. The Isolation Hospital photographed in 1919.



Fig. 2. Doctor Howard N. Kingsford.

Despite the building’s demolition shortly after Dick’s House’s opening in 1927, log books that have survived over the years can tell us an awful lot about what life staying in the Isolation Hospital was truly like. The idea for these log books came from Dr. Howard N Kingsford. As medical director, Dr. Kingsford’s responsibilities made him a less than popular figure. His main duties were to control outbreaks by quarantining any ill students to the Isolation Hospital and determining if students were sick enough to skip class and exams.

Dr. Kingsford hoped that the books would act as ***“a form of therapy”*** and mandated that all students who stayed at The Pest House had to write in the logs before they could leave. Whilst this rule was not popular among the students, it definitely made for a colorful collection of entries.

⁵ Pollard, Alice. “Pest House’ Days.” *Dartmouth Alumni Magazine*, May 1948, 21, <https://archive.dartmouthalumnimagazine.com/article/1948/5/1/pest-house-days>

⁶ Pollard, Alice. “Pest House’ Days.” *Dartmouth Alumni Magazine*, May 1948, 21, <https://archive.dartmouthalumnimagazine.com/article/1948/5/1/pest-house-days>

Many students at the time actively attempted to avoid being sent to the dreaded Pest House, often going to great lengths to hide signs of sickness and dodge Dr. Kingsford but their efforts were often in vain. After realising he had measles, Larry Lougee '29 planned to escape campus before being sent to the Pest House but his plans were thwarted when other students in his dorm building threatened to drag him down there themselves.⁷ Even the janitors were trained by Dr. Kingsford to spot signs of infectious diseases amongst the boys residing in the dorms and immediately report to him so that he could take them to the Pest House or, if he was busy, recruit a med student to.⁸

Dr. Kingsford often blamed girls for bringing contagious diseases to campus. After eight young women from Smith College, a women's liberal arts college in Northampton, Massachusetts, were permitted to attend Dartmouth's prom, he told the dean, *"Two of them came down with measles—and that started a fine thing here."*⁹ Regardless of the source of these infections, it is undeniable that the standard of medical attention at the Pest House was far from optimal. First and foremost, the Isolation Hospital was there to serve as a quarantine facility that prevented contagious illness from being spread across campus and making it a comfortable place to stay was not a priority.



Fig. 3 Doodle by a student depicting "St. Kingsford healing the lepers"

Other than Dr. Kingsford, the Pest House had no trained nurses or doctors permanently stationed there; however medical students at Geisel often took a role in caring for the Dartmouth men in exchange for free room and board. They were responsible for monitoring patients and delivering meals. It is safe to say that they were not always entirely dedicated to their responsibilities, likely due to the challenge of balancing these duties with their rigorous academic workload. The logs mention one medical student nicknamed 'Ailing' being so exhausted after a day of study that he would throw himself into bed and *"fall into a deep and*

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

*almost endless sleep.”*¹⁰ Similarly, Carleton D. Fletcher, a member of the Class of 1915, wrote, *“The Med student is so busy with the Medical School and taking after-dinner walks with his favorite cigar that I saw but little of him except at meal times.”*¹¹

Complaints about the Pest House extended far beyond the medical students. Students grumbled about the uncomfortable straw mattresses, the absence of “pretty” nurses, and the sheer boredom of being confined to a single room. Yet despite these hardships, some students deliberately tried to prolong their stay in an attempt to be excused from dull classes and looming exams by repeatedly hitting themselves with a hairbrush before Dr. Kingsford’s rounds to mimic worsening measles spots or purposefully applying creams that would give them a rash.¹²

Buried amongst the humor of the Pest House logs, there are certainly more tragic entries written by students feeling lonely, excluded and downright rotten. These entries are often from patients either staying in the Pest House alone or during exciting campus happenings such as football games, Winter Carnival and dances. Louis Wilcox was confined at the Pest House during the highly anticipated Dartmouth V Penn homecoming game. To add insult to injury, he then had to watch the famous homecoming bonfire from out of his window. After being forced to spend the football game *and* homecoming in the cramped isolation hospital, Louis recommended to some freshmen searching outside his window for firewood that *“they should take the Pest House”*.¹³

There are many more comically negative accounts of what staying in the Pest House was truly like but, at the expense of any comfort or joy, it did overall serve its purpose in preventing the spread of infectious disease amongst the student body.

Most students dreaded being sent there but had little choice, making their stay feel less like a compassionate treatment for illness and more like a punishment for getting sick in the first place.

¹⁰ Dartmouth College, Isolation Hospital records, DA-200. Rauner Library Archives and Manuscripts

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

The vast majority of students who stayed at the Pest House left with a sour taste in their mouth but they also left with a clean bill of health and were free to move on with their busy collegiate lives. This was due to the fact that the diseases most commonly seen at the Pest House were ones with optimistic prognoses and a high rate of recovery; however, not every disease can be effectively treated by forcing rest, fluid intake and consuming good meals. The Isolation Hospital simply wasn't equipped for diseases that required more specialised and urgent intervention.

Richard “Dick” Drew Hall

Richard Drew Hall, affectionately known as ‘Dick’ by friends and family, was born on the 19th of May 1904 in Newtonville, Massachusetts. He had two siblings, Dorothy and Edward Jr. and was the eldest son of Sally and Edward Kimball Hall. He chose to attend the college to follow in the footsteps of his father and both his grandfathers.



Fig. 4 A photograph of Richard 'Dick' Hall

His immense passion for Dartmouth was made clear in a note written by his sister, Dorothy.

*“There are many things in this house that speak of Dick as a Dartmouth student and of his loyalty to his college. But these pictures of the old-time Dartmouth are from the playmate of a sturdy little boy with light brown hair and dark brown eyes, who found his father’s college with a fierce love and who sang lustily of ‘dear old Dartmouth....- whether in defeat or victory we are lawyers just the same!’”*¹⁴



Fig. 5. Dick pictured in a Delta Kappa Epsilon newsletter

Dick died on the 8th of November 1924 from infantile paralysis, more commonly known as polio, just a few weeks into the beginning of the fall term of his sophomore year. He was only 20 years old. The exact circumstances surrounding his death aren’t fully known but he passed away at the Mary Hitchcock Memorial Hospital shortly after his symptoms began to manifest¹⁵.

¹⁴ Dorothy Hall Leavitt note, Mss 003270, Item: 1. Rauner Library Archives and Manuscripts.

¹⁵ Hall, Richard Drew. Death certificate. 8 November 1924. Hanover, Grafton County, New Hampshire. New Hampshire Division of Vital Records Administration. Accessed via *FamilySearch.org*.
<https://www.familysearch.org/>

Dick was undoubtedly popular amongst his fellow class of 27. He was a member of the Delta Kappa Epsilon fraternity and had a wide range of extracurricular interests. After his death, many of his friends wrote letters celebrating his life and character.

***“I shall always remember Dick for a most manly and difficult thing he did last year in enlisting my assistance in preventing the contemplated action of a classmate. Not one boy in a hundred would have the courage to do what Dick did.”*¹⁶ - E. Gordon Bill**

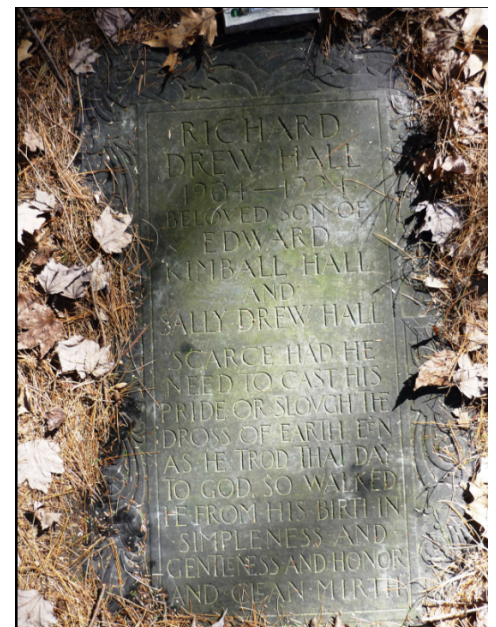
***“We needed his humor, his strength, and the blessed companionship of one who put friendship highest among earthly things.”*¹⁷ - Bill Holland**

His father, Edward, was the Vice President of AT&T and his mother was a prominent philanthropist, making the Hall family both extremely well-known and popular among the Dartmouth alumni population and beyond. Dick’s death was an unbelievably unexpected and devastating tragedy. It shone a glaring light on the huge short-comings of the college’s health services and showed how desperately the medical facilities needed to change.

Despite just undergoing the immeasurable loss of their son, Sally and Edward Hall decided that they wanted to channel their grief into something tangible and long-lasting. Just one year after Dick’s death, Sally and Edward gave the President of the college at the time, Ernest Hopkins, a proposition that would change the way Dartmouth approached student health care forever.

On the condition that it be named after Dick, the couple offered a sum totalling an estimated 2.5 million dollars (a staggering 45 million in 2025) to fund the construction of a state-of-the-art health center¹⁸.

Fig. 6. Dick Hall’s Grave in the Dartmouth Cemetery



¹⁶ Hall, Edward Kimball. *Richard Drew Hall, 1904-1924*. “2nd printing.”. Boston: Privately printed, 1926.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Dartmouth College: Dick Hall’s House: Correspondence, 1926 - 1935, Box: 2, Folder: 20. Henry Thayer papers, MS-710. Rauner Library Archives and Manuscripts.

They presented President Hopkins with a set of conditions for the new facility, such as the employment of *“a graduate nurse, trained to handle contagious diseases”*¹⁹ and a woman to oversee operations under the title of *“House Mother.”*²⁰ Edward and Sally also wished to be consulted on the selection of any new House Mother and any other general changes to the house for the rest of their lives.²¹

Hopkins, well aware just how necessary this gift would be in maintaining the well-being and safety of the student-body, was swift to accept these conditions and sent them a letter (which is still framed in Dick’s House) to express his gratitude. Within the letter, he expressed to the Halls that he had often worried about the closest hospital to Dartmouth being *“crowded to its doors”*²² and due to this, often became *“panicstricken”*²³ whenever illness began to spread amongst his students.

*“Nothing ever planned for the College was more needed nor more certain to serve the undergraduate body at a vital point than the gift you and Sally have in mind.”*²⁴ -

President Hopkins

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ernest M. Hopkins letter, Mss 925623, Item: 1, Rauner Library Archives and Manuscripts.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid.

Sally Drew Hall

Sally Drew Hall, Dick's Hall's mother, was born Sarah Maynard Drew (though she always went by Sally) on December 19th, 1876.²⁵ Sally was a New Hampshire native and the daughter of Dartmouth Alumni and Senator, Irving Webster Drew.

She attended the elite St. Mary School for Girls in Concord, NH and later went on to graduate Cum Laude from Radcliffe College (now Harvard College) in 1901.²⁶

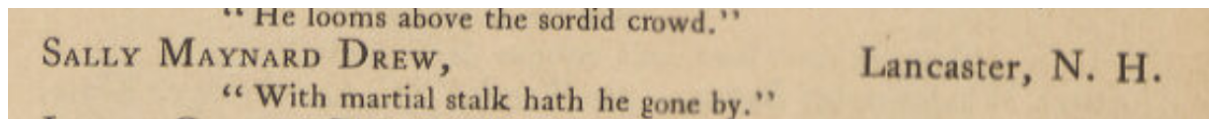


Fig. 7. Radcliffe year book, 1901

One year after her graduation, she married Dartmouth graduate Edward Kimball Hall who, at the time, was working as a lawyer in Boston.²⁷ The couple welcomed their first child, Dorothy, on the 23rd of March 1903. Dorothy was quickly followed by Richard "Dick" in 1904 and 6 years later, the family welcomed their third and final child, Edward, on the 16th of June 1910.

Despite having three children and being head of the household, Sally did not plan to keep her duties strictly on being a wife and a mother. She was a trustee of St Mary's and Radcliffe college as well as the Children's Hospital of Boston and The Neurological Institute of NYC. She was involved with the British War Relief, the American Red Cross, The League of Women Voters and the Hitchcock Drive for Hospital funds. Somehow, despite heavily dedicating herself to all of these pursuits, she also found time to socialise with the Daughters of America as well as various gardening clubs throughout her life.

²⁵ FamilySearch. "New Hampshire, Birth Records, Early to 1900." Entry for Drew and Irwin W. Drew, 18 December 1876.

<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:FLLF-FQW>

²⁶ *Radcliffe College Year Book, 1901* (Cambridge, MA: Radcliffe College, 1901), 6, [https://iif.lib.harvard.edu/manifests/view/drs:427981459\\$12i](https://iif.lib.harvard.edu/manifests/view/drs:427981459$12i)

²⁷ FamilySearch. "New Hampshire, Marriage Records, 1637-1947." Entry for Edward L. Hall and Sally M. Drew, 1902.

<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:FLH9-2TR>.

Beyond her philanthropic endeavours, Sally had an avid interest in interior design, antiques and art. This passion coupled with the grief she felt over the loss of her son compelled her to undertake the mammoth task of designing, decorating and furnishing each individual room within Dick's House.

Aware that many students who would be staying in the space would be far from home, Sally had only one goal in mind; it had to feel like home to anybody who stayed there.

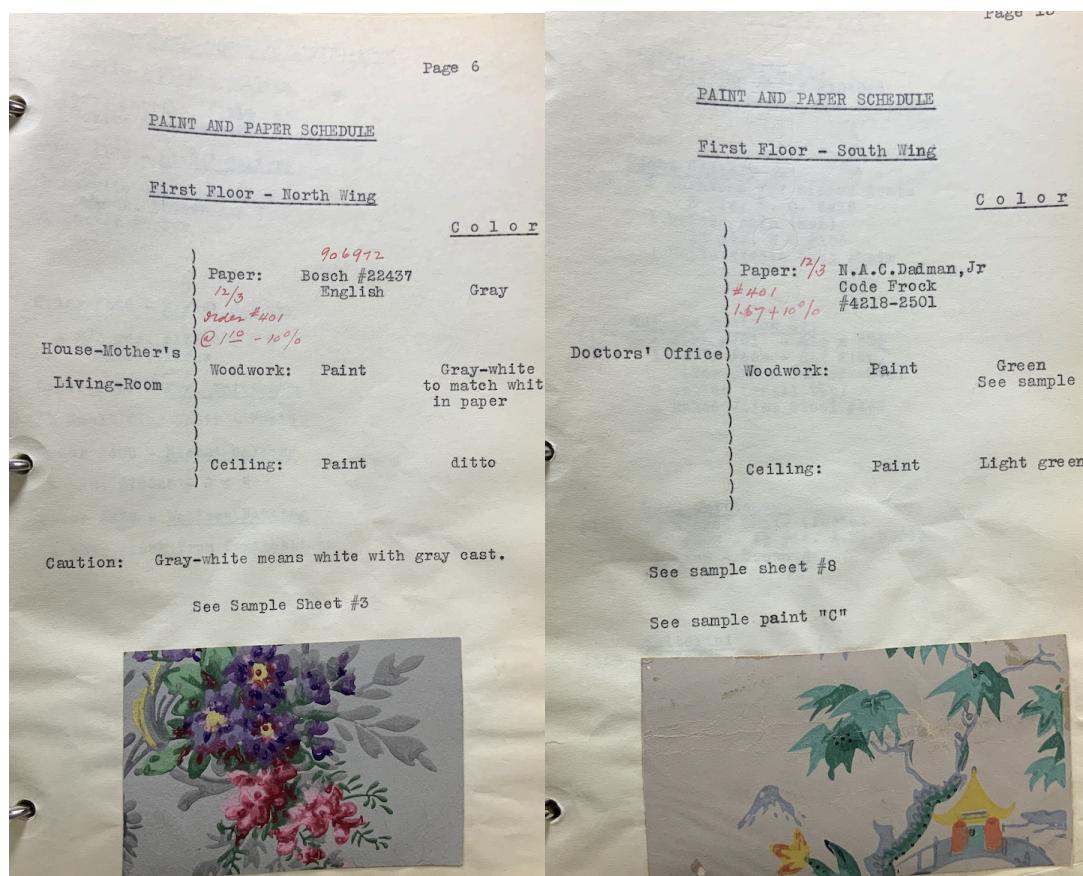


Fig. 8. Excerpts from Sally's Notebook

Sally kept a notebook of her plans that contains extensive notes, wall-paper samples and furniture listings.²⁸ She consulted with expert manufacturers to ensure her choices would be appropriate and long-lasting for a clinical setting, even scrapping one colour of paint she liked after being told by a

²⁸ Ibid.

paint expert that it would yellow over time if it was cleaned as often as the walls of an infirmary needed to be.²⁹

In 1927, the year that Dick should have been graduating, Dick's House was finally finished and ready to serve the community. After two years of construction, Dick's fellow class of 27's gathered with the Hall family to lay the final cornerstone to remember the boy that they lost and to officially declare his home open for business.



Fig. 9. Dick Hall's House dedication ceremony, 1927. Pictured: Sally Drew Hall, Edward Kimball Hall and Laura Gilmore

At the end of the ceremony, The Hall's announced to everyone their dream for Dick's House:

“This House will serve as an infirmary for Dartmouth students who are sick, as a place of recuperation for those who simply need rest and a bit of care, and for all who sojourn within its walls we hope that it will serve as a home.”³⁰

Once Dick's House began accepting their first patients, Sally was inundated with thank you letters from recovering students and their parents alike for her efforts in making Dick's House such a truly

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Dick Hall's House: see also Health Service; Furniture, ca. 1926-2015, Case: 5. Rauner Vertical Files, DA-857. Rauner Library Archives and Manuscripts.

wonderful place. A student who was the first of many to recover from an appendectomy there wrote *"This is more like a hotel than a hospital"*³¹ and predicted that after everyone began to see how delightful it was to stay there, they would begin thinking *"I'll have to get sick so that I can come down here."*³² Another letter Sally Received read; *"Your great conception in the realization of Dick's House is vital. It is felt by all of us...I relaxed up there and felt secure. And I know that Dick's House will be there tomorrow and many tommorows just as he would have it."*³³

³¹ Dick Hall's House: see also Health Service; Furniture, ca. 1926-2015, Case: 5. Rauner Vertical Files, DA-857. Rauner Library Archives and Manuscripts.

³² Dick Hall's House: see also Health Service; Furniture, ca. 1926-2015, Case: 5. Rauner Vertical Files, DA-857. Rauner Library Archives and Manuscripts.

³³ Ibid.

Design Work by Sally Drew Hall in Dick's House



Fig. 10. The guest room available for parents whilst their child was receiving treatment.



Fig. 11. The Library. In lieu of flowers, Sally and Edward requested books for convalescing students in need of entertainment.



Fig. 12. The main stairwell. Sally specifically chose the checkerboard floor because it was easy to maintain and sanitise.



Fig. 13. The southern-facing dining room with windows that purposefully allowed for plenty of natural light.

The father of a Dartmouth student and renowned physician, John R. Williams, also felt compelled to let Sally know just how much Dick's House had impressed him.

*"I have visited hospitals in all parts of the world and had much to do with hospital organization, being chief of the medical staff of one of our large local institutions. I do not think I ever saw an institution more completely equipped and none more beautiful. I could see a mother's touch in every part of the building and it made me feel glad that I had sent my son to Dartmouth."*³⁴

Dick's House began to draw acclaim for people entirely outside of the Dartmouth bubble. After a visit to the house, the Boston Evening Newspaper recalled how Sally had gone to great lengths to cleverly conceal some unsightly yet necessary patient call bells within one of the nurse's offices. The author of this article expressed that this seemingly insignificant detail, like many others, was what made the house such a charming place.³⁵

One of Dick's classmates, Theodore Swanson, wrote a book exploring the creation and realisation of Dick's House. When it came to Sally's work, he wrote *"When it came to decorating and furnishing, Mrs. Hall was in her element. She combined to an unusual degree an appreciation for both the practical and aesthetic. Her knowledge and love of American and English antiques were considerable. The appearance and atmosphere of Dick's House is a monument to her taste and perceptive understanding, for literally every piece of furniture from hospital beds to pictures on the walls was the result of her search and selection."*³⁶

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Dick Hall's House: see also Health Service; Furniture, ca. 1926-2015, Case: 5. Rauner Vertical Files, DA-857. Rauner Library Archives and Manuscripts.

³⁶ Swanson, Theodore, and Dartmouth College. Class of . *The Story of Dick Hall's House, Dartmouth College*. Lunenburg, Vt: Stinehour Press, 1977.

Sally remained invested in the upkeep of Dick's House for the rest of her life. Her husband, Edward, passed away at home only 8 years after their son from a sudden heart attack.³⁷ During this time, she continued to invest herself in philanthropies, becoming the director of The New Hampshire Children's Aid Society in 1943 and the President of The New Hampshire Citizens Council for General Welfare in 1946. Students continued to send letters to Sally expressing their gratitude and from her replies, it's clear that she gained great comfort in the knowledge that Dick's House continued to be a haven for those in need of care.



Fig. 14. A portrait of Dick hanging above the fireplace

To one student who had sent her a letter of thanks after a long stay at Dick's House, she responded *"Your beautiful letters, written at the end of your long stay under Dick's roof has struck a note deep in my heart."*³⁸ To another, *"If Dick's House has served you well both physically and spiritually it has once more fulfilled its highest purpose and I am happy indeed."*³⁹ and to another, towards the end of her life, she replied *"It was so good of you to write to me as you did. I feel that both Ed and Dick share with me these beautiful dividends on the investment of my love."*⁴⁰

At the commencement ceremony of the class of 1947, President of the college John Sloan Dickey presented Sally with an honorary doctorate of humane letters. She was the only woman to receive a degree that day. In addition to labelling Sally one of Dartmouth's *"great ladies of all time,"*⁴¹

³⁷ E.K. Hall, 62, Dead: Leader in Football," *The New York Times*. November 11, 1932, p. 19.

³⁸ 1920 - 1923, Box: 9 Edward Kimball Hall papers, ML-33. Rauner Library Archives and Manuscripts.

³⁹ 1920 - 1923, Box: 8 Edward Kimball Hall papers, ML-33. Rauner Library Archives and Manuscripts.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Dick Hall's House: see also Health Service; Furniture, ca. 1926-2015, Case: 5. Rauner Vertical Files, DA-857. Rauner Library Archives and Manuscripts.

Dickey accompanied her honorary degree with a citation:

*“Dartmouth Daughter, sister, wife, mother, benefactress and friend, you have added grace and renown to names on whose fame others might well have rested. Student and practitioner of human betterment, your life and works are clear proof that concern for others and effective civic service are but extensions of those capacities of understanding, care, and making common cause which build and bind the family. In recognition of the quality of your public mindedness, and in token of the esteem and affection long accorded you by the Dartmouth fellowship which your family’s generosity and your high spirit so uniquely and devotedly serve, I confer upon you the doctorate of humane letters.”*⁴²



Fig. 15. Sally at Commencement, 1947

On October 15th 1949, just two years after receiving her honorary doctorate, Sally passed away at her home in Hanover following a long battle with cancer⁴³. In her will Sally left a substantial fund, the E.K. Hall Fund, as well as the home she shared with Edward, to the college. After her passing, her daughter Dorory, overtook the responsibility of Dick’s House which she continued to do until her death in 1993.

For almost 20 years, Sally Drew Hall was unwaveringly dedicated to Dick’s House. It’s often said that grief is simply love with nowhere to go; Dick’s House was where Sally found a home for the immense love she held for her lost son. In her final years, she had the foresight to ensure that her work could continue and without her, Dick’s House would not be the warm home that generations of Dartmouth students have come to love and rely upon.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ FamilySearch. “New Hampshire, Death Certificates, 1938–1959.” Entry for Sally Drew Hall and Irving Webster Drew, 15 October 1949.

<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:QV3Q-PV7G>

Nurses, House Mothers and Administrators

While Sally's visions and careful attention to detail gave Dick's House its homelike atmosphere, over the years, she has not been the only woman responsible for making it such a welcoming and supportive environment. After almost 100 years of serving the Dartmouth community, Dick's House has had many highly skilled nurses and administrators work within its walls. In this next chapter, I want to focus on a few of those women. It's important to remember that this is by no means an exhaustive list of the many amazing women who have contributed to Dick's House but more an exploration of some of the women whose names and stories are present in the archival record.

Some of these women's stories are fragmental due to the lack of kept records on their lives and experiences. Much of the information that could be found was a consequence of their husbands or fathers attending Dartmouth and having records in Rauner's archival collections.

LAURA GILMORE

Unfortunately, the story of Laura B Gilmore, the first House Mother, is the most fragmented within this book. The gaps in her story exist for many reasons, one being that the labor of women was not seen as something to be preserved at the time and another being that Miss Gilmore never married or had children.

Fig. 16. Laura Gilmore at her desk in the House Mother's Office



She was born on the 2nd of September 1891 in Massachusetts to Canadian parents Alice Rice and James Gilmore.⁴⁴ At some point prior to 1927, she trained as a nurse and worked on the nurse teaching staff of the Milford Hospital, MA.⁴⁵

Whilst she was working at the Milford Hospital, Sally and Edward Hall were conducting *“an extensive search”*⁴⁶ for a woman not only qualified enough to fulfil the role of house mother but one who also embodied *“The spirit of Dick’s House.”*⁴⁷ After finding Miss Laura B Gilmore, the Hall’s eagerly extended an offer of employment.

The Halls had outlined in their list of wishes that the House Mother lived within Dick’s House. Upon accepting her role, Laura fulfilled this wish and moved to Hanover, residing in the House Mother’s room that Sally had designed and decorated.

Laura Gilmore’s time working at Dick’s House however, she was quoted as being *“a friend and ‘mother’ to thousands of Dartmouth students.”*⁴⁸ There are not extensive details about Laura’s tenure but it can be assumed that the House Mother job in the first few years of Dick’s

⁴⁴ FamilySearch. “United States, Census, 1910.” Entry for James P. Gilmore and Alices M. Gilmore, 1910. <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:M22L-QL4>

⁴⁵ “Miss Gilmore Resigns.” *Dartmouth Alumni Magazine*, December 1946, 26. <https://archive.dartmouthalumnimagazine.com/article/1946/12/miss-gilmore-resigns>

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

House was complicated. Not only was Laura vital in setting the tone of the institution, she was also working without the firm medical guidelines that are in place today and vaccinations against common diseases and infections.

She left Dick's House after working there for 19 years in 1947 due to health complications that made the demands of the job difficult to fulfill.⁴⁹ After her retirement, she continued to live in Hanover with her live-in maid, Mary Graham. After living in Hanover for many years, she travelled to Canada and passed

Fig. 17. Dick's House Drawing 1929 by J. Frederick Larson



away at the age of 94. In her obituary, it was stated that ***“hundreds of former patients remember her wonderful smile and cheery personality.”***⁵⁰

Though much of Laura's story is obscured, what can be found paints a picture of a highly skilled woman with significant influence. As the first, long term House Mother of Dick's House, she helped shape its early identity as a warm, welcoming place for healing and recovery.

⁴⁹ Ibid

⁵⁰ Clark, Eugene Francis. "Dick's House." Dartmouth Alumni Magazine, November 1927, 21, <https://archive.dartmouthalumnimagazine.com/article/1927/11/dicks-house>

Lois Morse (Née Dunn)

After Laura Gilmore stepped down, Sally Hall, now a widow, oversaw the search for the second House Mother and found one in Miss Lois Dunn. Lois became House Mother in 1947. By 1950, the title of the role had changed to *House Mother and Administrator*.⁵¹

Fig. 18. Lois Morse



Fig. 19. Lois with a student, proctoring an exam



Lois was born on September 7th 1909 in Lockhaven, PA.⁵² She attended Wellesley College from which she graduated in 1932 before pursuing a Masters of Nursing at Yale university.⁵³ During this time she also worked as a staff nurse in New York and as a research assistant with the Committee on Public Health relations at the New York Academy of Medicine.⁵⁴

When Lois arrived at Dick's House, it was not recognised by the American Hospital Association (AHA). Being a member of the AHA meant access to further education and resources for staff, extensive networking opportunities and advocacy to government bodies, all benefits that would be hugely advantageous..

⁵¹ DUNN LOIS A HOUSE MOTHER DICK'S HOUSE, 1470, Box: 7313. Dartmouth College, Dean of the Faculty records, DA-165. Rauner Library Archives and Manuscripts.

⁵² Obituary: Lois Morse." *Valley News*, February 26, 1997.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ "New House Mother". *Dartmouth Alumni Magazine*, October 1947, 33. <https://archive.dartmouthalumnimagazine.com/article/1947/10/new-house-mother>

In order to be recognised by the AHA, Lois had to make sure that the medical and nursing standards at Dick's House were up to scratch, which was no easy task. After years of hard work on raising these standards, Lois finally was able to get Dick's House recognised by the AHA in 1952.⁵⁵

At one point during her tenure, Lois had to handle a cross-campus measles outbreak which left her with 115 patients at one time which was far more patients than Dick's House was able to take. In order to handle this epidemic, Lois opened up 50 beds in the DOC house and ensured every patient's care was kept to a high standard, with some saying the experience was actually quite enjoyable.⁵⁶

After 11 years at Dick's House, Lois left in 1958⁵⁷ and became the director of the Practical Nursing Program at the Mary Hitchcock Memorial Hospital where she worked until 1968 before leaving to set up her own nursing program and become a professor at the New Hampshire Technical College in Claremont.⁵⁸ She married Dartmouth graduate, Emerson Morse, in 1961. The couple never had any children and resided in New Hampshire together. Emerson died at Dick's House only four years into their marriage in 1965.⁵⁹



Fig. 20. Lois receiving a Special Citizenship Award from Vo-Tech in recognition of her role in creating their Practical Nursing Program.

In 1991, the New Hampshire Technical College decided to dedicate a library to Lois as a commemoration of her hard work. She was overjoyed by this dedication, stating that it felt like **“being a wee bit of eternity”**.⁶⁰ Later in her life, Lois moved back to Hanover and in her old age was cared for at The Greens home until she passed away aged 87 in 1997.⁶¹

⁵⁵ “Dick's House”. *Dartmouth Alumni Magazine*, April 1967, 28. <https://archive.dartmouthalumnimagazine.com/article/1967/4/dicks-house>

⁵⁶ C.E.W. “Spotted Record.” *Dartmouth Alumni Magazine*, April 1952, 17. <https://archive.dartmouthalumnimagazine.com/article/1952/4/spotted-record>

⁵⁷ DUNN LOIS A HOUSE MOTHER DICK'S HOUSE, 1470, Box: 7313. Dartmouth College, Dean of the Faculty records, DA-165. Rauner Library Archives and Manuscripts.

⁵⁸ Obituary: Lois Morse.” *Valley News*, February 26, 1997.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ “Vo-Tech Graduates Told To Persevere, Sacrifice.” *Valley News*, June 7, 1976.

⁶¹ Obituary: Lois Morse.” *Valley News*, February 26, 1997.

Ruth King (Née Moser)

After Lois stepped down from the role of House Mother and Administrator, she passed the torch onto Ruth Moser King. Ruth had been working as a nurse at Dick's House since 1945 after graduating from the Mary Hitchcock School of Nursing in 1938 and working as a private nurse in New York for several years.⁶² Lois was satisfied with handing all of her responsibilities to King, stating that **"She was always very good with the students"**⁶³ and believed Ruth's ability to simultaneously be firm yet laugh with her patients would set her up for success.



Fig. 21. Ruth working at Dick's House, 1967

In 1958, Ruth wrote an article for The American Journal of Nursing titled **"A Day in a College Infirmary"**.⁶⁴ From dealing with students' shenanigans as they attempted to hide empty cans of beer in antique furniture to caring for a boy who had just been in a car accident that had killed his friend, this article demonstrates just how hectic and fast-paced life was as a Dick's House nurse. After becoming *House Mother and Administrator* in 1958, Ruth's title changed to *Administrator of Patient Care and Services* in 1970.⁶⁵



Fig. 22. Ruth chatting with a student, 1977

Ruth enjoyed travelling and spent many summers working as a volunteer nurse in Newfoundland and Labrador.⁶⁶ In 1976, she married Geisel professor in psychiatry and head of counseling at Dick's House, Francis King.⁶⁷ She was a girl scout leader in Wilder,

⁶² S.G. "Dick's House Is Her House." *Dartmouth Alumni Magazine*, November 1977. <https://archive.dartmouthalumnimagazine.com/article/1977/11/1/dicks-house-is-her-house>

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Moser, Ruth H. "A Day in a College Infirmary." *The American Journal of Nursing* 58, no. 3 (1958): 368–70. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3461667>.

⁶⁵ KING RUTH, Faculty Biographical And Vitae Data Files. Dartmouth College, Office of Communications records, DA-29. Rauner Library Archives and Manuscripts

⁶⁶ S.G. "Dick's House Is Her House." *Dartmouth Alumni Magazine*, November 1977. <https://archive.dartmouthalumnimagazine.com/article/1977/11/1/dicks-house-is-her-house>

⁶⁷ Ibid.

VT for 6 years and volunteered as a freshman student advisor for women students until her retirement in 1978.⁶⁸

Once women began attending Dartmouth College in 1974, Ruth already knew that Dick's House was ready for them. When asked by worried parents how she would cope with having both men and women in one building, she told them that she'd simply put male and female students in opposite rooms and purchase pyjamas to make sure that opposite-gender patients staying there wouldn't see each other in disarray.⁶⁹

During this time, she also set up the Student Health Aide program alongside health educator, Beverlie Conant Sloane.⁷⁰ This program aimed to train students in basic first aid, equip them with



Fig. 23. Beverlie Conant Sloane with a Student Health Aide kit, 1973

a box of supplies and empower them to care for their fellow students. Once her student health aides were trained and ready to help anyone who may need it, Ruth was immensely proud of them, remarking that they **“do a really fine job”**.⁷¹ In an interview with the Dartmouth Alumni magazine, she recalled two cases in which her health aides provided effective care to two students; one student who was dangerously intoxicated and another who

had injured their head in a nasty fall.⁷²

Ruth's life after her retirement in 1978 isn't easy to piece together but she spent time travelling with her husband, Francis, and their St. Bernard. By all accounts, they lived a wonderful retirement together and it is safe to say she lived a rich and fulfilling life.

⁶⁸ KING RUTH, Faculty Biographical And Vitae Data Files. Dartmouth College, Office of Communications records, DA-29. Rauner Library Archives and Manuscripts

⁶⁹ S.G. “Dick's House Is Her House.” *Dartmouth Alumni Magazine*, November 1977.

<https://archive.dartmouthalumnimagazine.com/article/1977/11/1/dicks-house-is-her-house>

⁷⁰ Ibid

⁷¹ Ibid

⁷² Ibid.

Lee Klunder (Née Booth)

In 1980, Lee Klunder began to work at Dick's House,⁷³ joining the team as Head Nurse. After graduating from the Mary Hitchcock School of Nursing in 1970, she worked at the Mary Hitchcock Memorial Hospital whilst simultaneously pursuing her Bachelor of Science in nursing from Saint Anselm College which she obtained in 1980.⁷⁴ Prior to pursuing her nursing degrees, Lee had married in 1955 and decided to begin her family before returning to education.⁷⁵



Fig. 24. Lee shortly after graduating from the MHMH School of Nursing



Fig. 25. Lee aged 8 holding a doll she enjoyed knitting booties for, 1949

Lee was adopted by the Booth family in 1936.⁷⁶ Her adoptive parents, Dartmouth alumni and English professor, Edmund Hendershot Booth and Jeanette Booth lived in Hanover with their son Phillip. The Booths knew that they wanted to have a daughter however, after Phillip's birth, doctors informed the couple that conceiving another child would not be possible. Upon hearing the news the Booths began working with adoption agencies, one of which introduced them to a 7 year old girl named Leola.⁷⁷

Edmund and Jeanette immediately fell in love with Lee (birth name Leola Barnes) and brought her home to Hanover on a fostering basis. During this time, Edmund kept an extensive diary on Lee's

⁷³ Dick Hall's House: see also Health Service; Furniture, ca. 1926-2015, Case: 5. Rauner Vertical Files, DA-857. Rauner Library Archives and Manuscripts.

⁷⁴ "Obituary: Lee Klunder." *Valley News*, April 24, 2009.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Personal Affairs: Letters from Edmund H. Booth to Dr. Marion Booth concerning the adoption of Leola Barnes, later called Lee Marion Booth, 1935 - 1937, Box: 21, Folder: 75.

Edmund H. Booth papers, ML-54. Rauner Library Archives and Manuscripts.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

first few months in their home. In a letter to his sister, he happily described Lee's appearance, her hobbies and stated that *"little girls with Lee's characteristics must be exceedingly rare."*⁷⁸

Lee had some adjusting to do now that she was a member of an upper-class family. After taking her to a doctor for the first time, the Booths discovered that Lee had mild rickets from malnutrition and a lack of sunlight exposure.⁷⁹ After spending some time with her, Edmund and Jeannette realised that Lee's life before her adoption was full of trauma and hardship.

Her biological mother, Laura, died from childbirth complications when Lee was very young and her father was absent. Edmund noted down many fragments of conversations Lee had with him and her adoptive mother, Jeannette. In one conversation, Lee had told Jeannette that she had witnessed two younger siblings pass away. One was a brother who was stillborn and another passed away from what Lee described as *"stomach trouble"*.⁸⁰



Fig. 26. Lee and Jeannette out on a stroll, circa 1948

Edmund's diary entries about Lee are not all marked by tragedy and sorrow. Whilst on a walk with her mother, Lee encountered some freshmen on campus. After being told exactly what the word 'freshmen' meant, she quickly asked *"Well, then, do they have freshWOMEN?"*⁸¹ and was less than pleased upon hearing that women could not attend Dartmouth College at the time.

Luckily, once Lee arrived at Dartmouth as an employee in 1980, Dartmouth had entered into coeducation. Lee's appearance in records is sporadic throughout the early years of her time working at Dick's House; however, she can be found again in 1989 when John Sloan Dickey moved into Dick's House to receive hospice care.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Ibid.

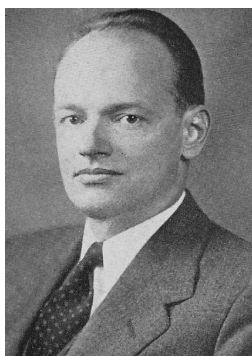


Fig. 27. John Sloan Dickey

Around 10 years after Dickey had stepped down as the president of the college in 1970, he suffered a massive stroke that left him bedridden and in need of 24/7 assistance. Dickey's family corresponded with the President of the College at the time, David McLaughlin, and made arrangements for Dickey to be cared for at Dick's House.⁸²

During the time that Dickey resided there, the inpatient department remained open 24/7 for 52 weeks of the year. Aware that this was not a permanent situation, Lee Klunder and McLaughlin's administration agreed that once Dickey did pass away, the inpatient department would close during college breaks when students weren't on campus.⁸³ Lee and her team were content with this proposed change despite the fact it reduced their working weeks (and therefore their wages) down to 45.⁸⁴

Dickey went on to live at Dick's House for another 9 years and by this time, the presidency of the college had passed on to James O. Freedman in 1987. Freedman, faced with budget cuts, was keen to keep the college's costs down wherever he could. When Dickey passed away in 1991, without consulting Lee,⁸⁵ Freedman made the decision to close Dick's House's inpatient department during the summer term in addition to the interim periods. This change meant that Lee and her team were now only able to receive pay for 39 weeks which cut her wages by 25%, a loss of \$12,000 (around \$28,000 in 2025) a year.⁸⁶

Fig. 28. A Valley News article chronicling Lee's complaint



⁸² Barlow, Rich. "Dartmouth Nurse: Agreement Breached in the Valley News." *Valley News*, August 30, 1991.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

Lee was taken aback by the decision, especially as this budget cut only impacted the in-patient department and none of the other departments at Dick's House. She felt as though she and her colleagues had gotten close with Dickey and with Dickey's daughter herself calling the standard of nursing **"wonderful"**⁸⁷, the decision felt harsh and unexpected.⁸⁸

Instead of just allowing this to happen without any pushback, Lee decided to file a complaint against the college. The Valley News picked up her story and conducted an interview with her in which she told the reporters that the cut to her wage wasn't the motivator behind this complaint. Despite being a mother of 5, Lee didn't need the money.

"I don't want my children to go on thinking that large corporations and large businesses can walk all over women, I want them to know that their mother was not intimidated."⁸⁹

- Lee Klunder

Unfortunately, beyond the initial complaint, there is no further information to be found about this situation. Lee went on to retire in 1994, at the age of 66, after 15 years of service at Dick's House. She spent her retirement surrounded by family and tending to her garden before passing away in 2009 at the age of 80⁹⁰.

The records of Lee's life speak volumes to her strength, empathy and refusal to be overlooked by anyone. She embodied the spirit of Dick's House in her commitment to the well-being of others and her legacy, like the many other women who helped to shape it, continues on through the many lives that she touched and the example that she set.

⁸⁷

Ibid.

⁸⁸

Ibid.

⁸⁹

Ibid.

⁹⁰

"Obituary: Lee Klunder." *Valley News*, April 24, 2009.

Reflection

Dick's House as it stands today was built by the hands of women. From Sally Drew Hall's original vision of a beautiful space for healing that honored her son's memory to the nurses, administrators and house mothers who brought not only comfort but innovation and knowledge to its walls, Dick's House has never been *just* a medical facility. For generations of Dartmouth students, it has been a home, a safe escape and a reflection of the ever-evolving values of Dartmouth college.

In chronicling and learning about these women's lives, we celebrate their tireless efforts as they navigated systems that undervalued their labor and education on the basis of their sex. There are narratives still at play today that tell us that caregiving roles are a woman's job and that if they do decide to dedicate themselves to the care of others, it was an inevitability.

These women did not just 'fall' into nursing. They decided to pursue a higher education and to consistently study for years. They chose to show up day after day to serve the students of Dartmouth college with compassion and understanding.

Dick's House, like all institutions, has changed over time and will certainly continue to do so; however, what will always remain is the spirit in which it was founded: that those who are healing deserve dignity and comfort.

Fig. 29. Dick's House staff photo, 1953



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