Preface

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*Handling the Sick* analyzes the rich archival collection of the St. Luke’s Hospital and Nurse Training School, documenting the creation, growth, and demise of an early twentieth-century hospital nursing school—a school similar to many others around the country. In it, we hear the voices of applicants, nursing students, rank-and-file nurses, and administrators as we come to understand the motivations that led women into nursing and what the work meant to them, both personally and professionally. The women took pride in their on-the-job training and workplace experience that emphasized the development of their abilities and their character. Tom Olson and Eileen Walsh demonstrate that, for this generation, nursing was not a profession, but a skilled craft. Challenging much of the historiography in the history of nursing, their study is an important contribution to the discipline as well as to women’s history and health care history in the twentieth century. We are pleased to publish this provocative study of professional development in the early year’s of nursing’s formation.

Rima D. Apple
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