

*Reference*

# The Kentucky Committee for Mothers and Babies



*"He shall gather the lambs with his arm  
and carry them in his bosom, and shall  
gently lead those that are with young."*

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## INTRODUCTION

Notwithstanding the advanced public health work done in many parts of the United States, which has resulted in the prolongation of human life and greatly decreased mortality from preventable disease, statistics show that our mortality from childbirth is higher than in any other civilized country. The sixteen other countries that have lower death rates have no better medical and nursing service than ours, but they all have what we conspicuously lack, a large body of qualified midwives, trained and supervised. Although we also use midwives for about thirty per cent of our confinements, we have not brought them abreast of the times except in one or two of the large cities. So that while we could not conceive of eighteenth century surgery for our young soldiers, we continue to supply eighteenth century obstetrics to our young mothers, and have lost more women in childbirth in our history as a nation than men on the field of battle, and over a hundred thousand of our youngest and most defenseless citizens pass annually from one dark cradle to another with hardly a gap between.

The same system that has effected such marked reductions in the maternal and infant death rate in other countries, viz: that of substituting trained and supervised midwives for untrained ones, could effectively be used in meeting the needs in our isolated rural areas, especially as carried out in Great Britain with its similar language and traditions. In England the Queen Victoria's Jubilee Institute for Nurses had a maternal death rate in 1923 of only 1.4 per thousand, in the 54,554 confinements attended by their nurses—who are trained as midwives—the lowest rate on such a large scale in the world. Splendid work of this character is also being done under the Scottish Board of Health, in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland.

In many parts of rural Kentucky are to be found pure Anglo-Saxon folk, living under conditions similar to their kins-people in the British Isles, but entirely lacking the trained service described above.

### THE FIRST MEETING

To meet this need the Kentucky Committee for Mothers and Babies met at the call of Mrs. Mary Breckinridge, on May 28, 1925, at the Capitol Hotel, Frankfort, Kentucky, to form an organization and elect its executive officers.

Judge Edward O'Rear opened the meeting.

Dr. Alexander J. A. Alexander was elected temporary chairman and Mrs. W. H. Coffman temporary secretary.

Mrs. Breckinridge, the first speaker, outlined briefly the character of the work to be undertaken, and said that it would be carried forward from special nursing centers where each nurse-midwife would give midwifery, nursing and public health care to an area no larger than she could handle well on horseback with not more than fifteen hundred people. Stress would be laid on the prenatal period, the care in childbirth and after-care of mother and baby, and the further needs of the young child—treating the other phases of public health nursing as valuable but secondary aspects of the work. She said that the nurses chosen would need to have, in addition to their general hospital and public health training, a few months special preparation as midwives similar to that which she had obtained in England.

Mrs. Breckinridge said further that a mountain county had been selected for this initial demonstration, not because the problem was peculiar to the mountains, but for the following reasons:

1. The mountains presented an intensification of the problem and it was more sporting to begin there.
2. The native population in the mountains had a very high average of ability and was of the greatest possible value to the nation. She cited figures of Ella Woodyard, a psychologist from Thorndyke's department at Teachers' College, Columbia, tabulated from original research in the Kentucky mountains two summers ago, and figures regarding the proportionate attendance of Scotch Highlanders at universities, to prove this as characteristic of the mountaineer in both countries.
3. The picturesque appeal of the mountains would draw a more ready response in getting the work under way.

Mrs. Breckinridge then described how the midwifery features could be related satisfactorily to a generalized rural nursing program. She said that the majority of abnormal cases did not occur accidentally but were created by dirty midwifery and lack of simple prenatal precautions. As for the difficult case, which would absolutely require a doctor, for that the midwife, trained to observe the signs of the abnormal, just as the nurse is trained to observe them in the nursing of sick people, either would secure medical attention from the nearest possible point, *in time*, or arrange by means of passes generously offered by the Louisville and Nashville railroad through Mr. Jouett, a member of this committee, to transport such a case to the nearest city hospital, *in time*.

Mrs. Breckinridge said that funds were available for the initial work of the committee, to be carried out this summer, and that the question of expenses would be taken up with the executive group. She said that in the Hebrides, where economic and geographic conditions were suggestive of those in our own Highlands, it was found that about twenty per cent of the costs of such a service were recoverable locally from small obstetric fees, (which our own service would also charge), and from local annual subscriptions requested by the local committee of every householder, from half a crown on up, and payable in money or in kind. She suggested that we adopt a somewhat similar system. She read the suggestions of several national organizations as to salaries suitable for the staff nurses and suggested that the committee adopt a scale of \$150.00 monthly for each nurse-midwife, together with the upkeep of a horse. This, with supplies, records, etc., would make the total cost of each center of nurse-midwifery approximately \$200.00 a month. Places would have to be found or built in which the nurses could live.

The next speaker was Judge O'Rear, of Frankfort, who said he knew of the conditions and possibilities of the mountains from having been a part of them; that wherever you find them the Highland people were the seed corn of the world. He was impressed by the program, by its sublime audacity, and felt sure of its success.

The third speaker, Mrs. Samuel Henning, of Louisville,

spoke of her deep interest in this particular form of health work and her pleasure in being identified with this committee. She paid a tribute to the State Board of Health and its officers for their valuable contributions to maternal and infant welfare and said that she thought the work undertaken by this committee the next logical step in the state-wide betterment of conditions for mothers and babies.

Dr. Scott Breckinridge, of Lexington, speaking for the medical profession, felt sure that the profession as a whole would welcome the assistance of the trained midwife. He cited figures to show that about sixty per cent of all maternal deaths came from two causes only, viz: infections and toxaemias, both preventable, except in rare instances, the one by cleanliness at delivery and the other by simple prenatal precautions. He felt that they easily fell under the scope of the trained nurse-midwife and asked what other prevalent cause of death could be reduced sixty per cent so certainly?

Miss Linda Neville, of Lexington, who spoke next, said she had been too busy all these years keeping babies from being blind and helping crippled children to walk, to have time to enjoy a baby, and felt she had overlooked the needs of the mothers, but that from this time on her slogan would be "save the mothers" and she pledged her wholehearted assistance to this work. She cited a case she had to deal with that very morning, as a member of the State Commission of Charities and Corrections, of a fourteen year old boy just sent to the penitentiary for stealing. He said his mother had died five years before. And she asked if the penal tragedies faced by the State Commission might not be less frequent when fewer mothers died?

Miss McCord, head of the Wooton Community House in Leslie county, who was in the audience, was called on for a few remarks and expressed her deep appreciation of the movement to bring a work so fundamental as the conservation of mothers and babies to her county and her desire to be of all possible assistance.

The following Resolutions, proposed by Mrs. Henning, were adopted unanimously:

## RESOLUTIONS

1. That the name of this association shall be the Kentucky Committee for Mothers and Babies.

2. That its purpose is to safeguard the lives and health of mothers and young children by providing trained nurse-midwives for rural areas where there are no resident physicians.

3. That the nurse-midwives shall work under supervision; in compliance with the Regulations for Midwives of the State Board of Health, and the law governing the Registration of Nurses in Kentucky; and in cooperation with the nearest medical service.

4. That the value of this service shall be demonstrated first in a given county, (Leslie having been selected by permission of the State Board of Health), and in cooperation with a County Branch Committee, with which the Kentucky Committee shall have reciprocal membership.

5. That accurate records shall be kept, and the work begun with a survey in cooperation with the State Board of Health, to obtain one hundred per cent registration of births and deaths in a given county, in order that the value of the service in terms of human life may be established.

6. Resolved further: That the Kentucky Committee for Mothers and Babies shall be limited to 100 members, a quorum of which may be 12 or more, that it shall meet on call at least twice yearly, and that each member shall receive reports of work carried on between meetings.

7. That an Executive Group shall be formed consisting of a chairman, two vice-chairmen, a treasurer, a secretary and fourteen members, inclusive, elected by the Kentucky Committee at the spring meeting, the terms to expire at the following spring meeting and upon the election of their successors; vacancies may be filled ad interim by the remaining members. That to this Executive Group shall be delegated all the powers and responsibilities of the Kentucky Committee, when it is not in session; That this Executive Group shall pass on names for membership and present them to the Kentucky Committee meetings for ratification, receive and disburse funds, determine budgets,

receive and distribute reports, organize auxiliary committees in other states as requested, determine questions of finance, supplies, records, policies, in cooperation with the directing nurse-midwife, and, wherever policies are local, with the County Branch Committee.

8. That the State Health Officer, Dr. Arthur McCormack, be made an Honorary Member of the Kentucky Committee for Mothers and Babies.

9. That these Resolutions may be amended, repealed or supplemented at any meeting of the Kentucky Committee when such amendments, repeals, or supplements are reported through the Executive Group. That the Executive Group shall adopt by-laws defining the duties of the Executive officers.

Mrs. Churchill Humphrey presented the names suggested for nomination of an executive group, which were unanimously elected on the motion of Mr. Desha Breckinridge.

The motion of Dean Robert K. Massie that Miss Bertram Ireland, of Scotland, be engaged to conduct a survey of births and deaths in Leslie County this summer, for the Kentucky Committee for Mothers and Babies, in cooperation with the State Board of Health, was unanimously adopted. In connection with this motion the following excerpt was read from Sir Leslie Mackenzie's Report on the Physical Welfare of Scottish Mothers and Children:

"Miss Bertram Ireland acted as Secretary to the Inquiry. She visited, by herself or with some other investigator, many of the localities and institutions described. To her skill, tact and patience in collecting and recording facts, opinions and impressions, the Report owes much of its most valuable material. At every stage of the inquiry, from the first organization to the correcting of proof, I have profited by her suggestions and criticism."

The motion of Miss Linda Neville that Miss Caffin and Miss Rochstroh, experienced American public health nurses with highest endorsements, now taking a midwife's course of training in London, be offered positions with the Kentucky Committee for Mothers and Babies upon their return, was unanimously adopted.



PERSONNEL OF  
THE KENTUCKY COMMITTEE FOR MOTHERS AND  
BABIES

Executive Group

Chairman

Alexander J. A. Alexander, Spring Station, Woodford County

Vice-Chairmen

Mrs. S. C. Henning, Cherokee Park, Louisville.  
Judge Edward O'Rear, Frankfort

Treasurer

C. N. Manning, Security Trust Company, Lexington

Secretary

Mrs. W. H. Coffman, Georgetown

Mrs. Preston Johnston, Fayette County

Mrs. Joseph Carter, Woodford County.

Dr. Josephine Hunt, Lexington. *164 Market*

Mrs. Frank McVey, Lexington.

Miss Linda Neville, Lexington.

Dr. Scott Breckinridge, Lexington. *164 Market*

Judge Dixon. Woolon. Leslie County Chairman

MEMBERS

- 1 Dr. Irvin Abel, Louisville. 1136 - Seaside
- 2 Judge Lafon Allen, Louisville. Glenview - In. Son
- 3 Mrs. A. J. A. Alexander, Woodford County
- 4 Mrs. Claude Barnes, Louisville. 1328 4th
- 5 Mrs. Francis R. Beattie, Louisville. 234 E. Gray
- 6 Desha Breckinridge, Lexington.
- 7 Col. James C. Breckinridge, Washington, D. C. U.S. Marine Barracks
- 8 Mrs. John C. Breckinridge, New York City. 400 Park Ave
- 9 Hon. H. M. Brock, Harlan.
- 10 Miss Elizabeth Bruce, R. N., Louisville.
- 11 Cabell Bullock, Lexington.
- 12 Dr. Waller Bullock, Lexington.
- 13 Rev. Benj. J. Bush, D. D., Lexington. 536 Sayre Ave
- 14 Hon. Thos. Combs, Lexington. 147 1st Ave
- 15 Attila Cox, Louisville. 1365 3rd
- 16 Right Rev. U. V. W. Darlington, Huntington, W. Virginia.
- 17 John B. Eversole, Lexington. 440 Fayette Park
- 18 Dr. J. A. Flexner, Louisville. 1011 Dury, Blvd
- 19 Rev. A. W. Fortune, D. D., Lexington. 624 Elmore
- 20 Miss Lucy Furman, Hindman.
- 21 Hon. Alex Hargis, Jackson.
- 22 Mrs. Louis L. Haggin, Fayette County.
- 23 Mrs. S. H. Halley, Fayette County.
- 24 J. L. Harman, Bowling Green.
- 25 Mrs. Roy Helm, Hazard.
- 26 Mrs. Jeter Horton, Quantico, Virginia.
- 27 Mrs. Churchill Humphrey, Louisville. 2530 Ransdell
- 28 Clay Hunt, Lexington. 239 N B'way
- 29 George Hunt, Lexington. 424 W. Sec
- 30 Mrs. George Hunt, Lexington. "
- 31 Dr. Josephine Hunt, Lexington. 530 Sayre
- 32 President William J. Hutchins, Berea.
- 33 Miss Muriel Hopkins, University of Kentucky.
- 34 Miss Mary Johnston, Louisville. 1407 3rd
- 35 E. S. Jouett, Louisville. 1253 Ches. Rte
- 36 Miss Flora Keene, R. N., Somerset.
- 37 Mrs. Mary Breckinridge Maltby, Lexington.
- 38 Very Rev. Robert K. Massie, D. D., Lexington.
- 39 President Frank L. McVey, University of Kentucky.
- 40 Mrs. J. R. Morton, Lexington. 231 N Mill
- 41 Rev. E. Y. Mullins, D. D., Louisville. 1311 Ches. Rte
- 42 Miss Bessie McDonald, R. N., Louisville.
- 43 Dr. Barnett Owen, Louisville. 1257 " "
- 44 Miss Katherine Pettit, Pine Mountain.
- 45 Dr. Alice N. Pickett, Louisville. 1215 4th
- 46 Mrs. E. S. Porter, Louisville. 27 East over Pt
- 47 Mrs. James Roberts, Frankfort.
- 48 Mrs. James Spillman, Harrodsburg.
- 49 Miss May Stone, Hindman.
- 50 Dr. J. A. Stucky, Lexington. 905 E. Main
- 51 Rev. Charles W. Welch, D. D., Louisville. 1436 St James
- 52 Mrs. E. Waring Wilson, Rosemont, Pennsylvania.
- 53 Rev. Charles M. Vander Meulen, D. D., Louisville. 1421 Coulterville

Mrs. W<sup>m</sup> R. Belknap 2115 Douglas Boulevard Av.

