Guide to the Dorothy M. Breene Papers, 1920-1984

Administrative Information

Title and Dates:
Dorothy M. Breene Papers, 1920-1984

Repository:
New Hampshire Historical Society
30 Park Street
Concord, NH 03301
603-228-6688
nhhistory.org

Collection Number:
2026.007

Author of Finding Aid:
Sandra L. Wheeler

Creator:
Breene, Dorothy M., 1905-1984

Language:
The materials in this collection are in English.

Extent:
1 box and 1 oversized folder ; 0.21 linear feet

Abstract:
The Dorothy M. Breene Papers summarize the career of this registered nurse who served in many leadership positions at the New Hampshire Hospital over her 40-plus year career. After completing her nursing education there, she taught nursing for a decade, and then was the nursing director of the institution for 30 years until her retirement in 1975. She received an honorary Doctor of Science degree from New England College in 1975. The collection contains records of her awards and commendations, newspaper articles about her, and photographs of Breene and her colleagues, but very few personal papers.

Access and Use

Acquisition Information and Provenance:
The Dorothy M. Breene Papers were the gift of Aimee Moffitt-Mercer on February 17, 2026.

Processing Information:
This collection was processed by Sandra L. Wheeler in June 2026. The finding aid was written by Sandra L. Wheeler in June 2026. This finding aid follows the standards set-forth by *Describing Archives: A Content Standard*.

Access Restrictions:
Available for research.

Location:
The collection is housed at the New Hampshire Historical Society in Concord, New Hampshire.

Physical Characteristics and Technical Requirements:
The materials in this collection are paper based and have no special technical requirements for use.

Copyright/Conditions Governing Use:
For permission to reproduce or publish materials from this collection, please contact the New Hampshire Historical Society. Users are responsible for following all copyright and intellectual property laws.

Preferred Citation:
Item title, Dorothy M. Breene Papers, 2026.007, New Hampshire Historical Society, Concord, NH. Date accessed.

Collection Overview

Biographical Information
Dorothy Mae Breene (1905-1984) was born to John Breen and Rosa Walker in Rockland, ME, on September 23, 1905. The final ‘e’ in her surname was added at an unknown time. She graduated from high school there in 1925 and then from the Normal School in Gorham, ME, in 1926 before receiving her nursing education at the New Hampshire State Hospital School of Nursing in Concord, NH, graduating in 1930. She remained at that hospital for her entire career, working first as a head nurse and supervisor, then in the nursing school from 1932 to 1944, and finally as director of nursing from 1944 to 1975. She received a Bachelor of Science degree at Mount Saint Mary College in 1953 and attended Boston University Graduate School of Nursing Administration from 1954 to 1956. Breene was an instructor in the Cadet Nurse Program during World War II, lectured on psychiatric nursing at St. Anselm College School of Nursing, was an adult education teacher at the Union School District from 1960 to 1962, and served on the U.S. Surgeon General’s Consultant Group on Nursing in 1961.

She was also a member of numerous nursing associations and served on the board, as president, or as vice president of the New Hampshire League of Nursing, New Hampshire Nurses Association, New Hampshire Hospital School of Nursing Alumni Association, and New Hampshire State Employees Association. In addition, she received many awards and commendations, including the University of New Hampshire's Granite State Award in 1974 and an honorary Doctor of Science degree from New England College in 1975. Breene is included in *New Hampshire Notables* (1955) and *Who's Who of American Women* (1966-1967). She died in Concord on November 11, 1984.

Collection Scope and Content Note:
The Dorothy M. Breene Papers, 1920-1984, is a small collection that documents the professional accomplishments of Breene, a registered nurse who worked at the New Hampshire Hospital in Concord, NH, for more than four decades. After completing her nursing education there, she served as a nursing instructor for a decade before becoming nursing director for 30 years until her retirement in 1975.

The collection consists primarily of awards, commendations, newspaper clippings, and photographs related to Breene and her career. Such materials include recognition of her wartime service as an instructor of the U.S. Cadet Nurse Corps (World War II), Woman of the Year from the New Hampshire State Hospital School of Nursing, an honorary degree from New England College, and certificates of appreciation. This collection contains few personal papers. Aside from a small number of postcards, there is little personal correspondence, although there are two letters of thanks from Senator Margaret Chase Smith after a visit to the hospital. The correspondence also contains postcards of other family and friends. The collection contains no internal records from the New Hampshire Hospital.

Photographs in this collection include images of Breene and unidentified family members, possibly including a half-sister and a niece as many photographs of Breene are labeled "Aunt Dot". There are a few images of her as a child, including as the "Champion of Maine" roller skating state championship winner in 1920. Additional photographs show her in her nursing uniform and with colleagues, as well as of the New Hampshire Hospital Nurses Home. In addition to these records, the collection includes a sound recording disc sent from John H. Breen Jr. to Dorothy Breene in 1950, although its contents and playability are unknown.

Arrangement:
Materials are arranged by genre and then chronologically.

Contents List

Box 1

Folder 1	Awards, appointments, commendations, honorary degree, 1935, 1962-1984, undated
Folder 2	Biographical information, 1961-1983, undated
Folder 3	Correspondence, 1942-1947, 1954
Folder 4	Correspondence, 1961-1969, 1977, 1982
Folder 5	Ephemera, 1938, 1962, undated

New Hampshire Hospital's Nurses Home calendar, 1938
Postcard of St. Mary's Hospital, Amsterdam, NY, 1962
New Hampshire Hospital Department of Nursing Dorothy M. Breene Nursing Education Trust Fund booklet, undated
Postcard of New Hampshire Odd Fellows Home, Concord, NH, undated
Responsive and Reliable, Re-elect U.S. Senator Margaret Chase Smith, undated

Folder 6 Photographs: Dorothy Breene, 1920-1923, 1961, 1974, undated
Folder 7 Photographs: Dorothy Breene, nurse, 1938, undated
Folder 8 Photographs: friends and colleagues, undated
Folder 9 Photographs: New Hampshire Hospital Nurses Home, 1925, 1984
Folder 10 Sound recording disc "John H. Breen Jr to Dorothy Breen," 1950

Separated Materials:
A commendation to Dorothy M. Breene R.N., D. Sc., from Governor Meldrim Thomson Jr. dated November 18, 1975 has been moved to Oversized Manuscripts Box 'B'.

Subject Terms

People:
Breene, Dorothy M., 1905-1984
Smith, Margaret Chase, 1897-1995

Organizations:
New England College
New Hampshire State Hospital
New Hampshire State Hospital. School of Nursing
United States. Cadet Nurses Corps

Subjects:
Degrees, Academic
Hospitals
Nursing
Nursing--Awards
Photographs
Roller skating
World War, 1939-1945

Locations:
Concord, NH

Occupations:
Nurses
Teachers