



Women's History Month

a supplement to

News Journal

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We Recognize Board member, Doris Caldwell for 27 years of service to the community, passion for life, & commitment to women in need.



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Beit Hannah Szenes
Jewish parachutist
Hannah Szenes with
her brother, before
leaving for a rescue
mission. Palestine,
March 1944.

Jewish Parachutists from Palestine

Between 1943 and 1945, a group of Jewish men and women from Palestine who had volunteered to join the British army parachuted into German-occupied Europe. Their mission was to organize resistance to the Germans and aid in the rescue of Allied personnel. Of the 250 original volunteers, 110 underwent training. Thirty-two eventually parachuted into Europe and five infiltrated the target countries by other routes. Most of those selected for training were emigres from Europe, with intimate knowledge of the countries to which they would be sent.

Three of the parachutists infiltrated Hungary, five participated in the Slovak national uprising in October 1944, and six operated in northern Italy. Ten parachutists served with British liaison missions to the Yugoslav partisans. Nine parachutists operated in Romania. Two

others entered Bulgaria, and one each operated in France and Austria.

The Germans captured 12 and executed 7 of the 37 parachutists sent into occupied Europe. Three of those executed were captured in Slovakia. Two were captured in Hungary and one in northern Italy. After 7 missions the parachutist who entered France was captured and killed.

Hannah Szenes, one of the best-known of the parachutists, was seized in German-occupied Hungary and executed in Budapest on November 7, 1944, at the age of 23. Szenes was a talented poet and her songs are still sung in Israel.

After the war, remains of the seven parachutists who lost their lives during the war, including Szenes, were interred in the National Military Cemetery overlooking Jerusalem in Israel.

A letter from New Life Clinic

For me, a 12 year resident of Wilmington, OH, a wife of perhaps the most passionate Buckeye football fan, the mother of three beautiful girls, and the director of a local women's organization, I am proud to be a woman and I wear pink with no hesitation! I think there is something wonderful about this gender that reflects the imaginative, beautiful, artistic side of our Creator.

When I think of women's history I guess I'm most prone to reflect upon the women in my life who have made a difference in their world and who have encouraged me to be the unique woman that I was created to be. Over the last decade, I've found a place right here in Clinton County that celebrates our uniqueness and champions the beauty within each woman. Allow me to give you a little background on this amazing organization.

For more than 30 years in Clinton County, women facing unplanned or crisis pregnancies have had a place to go for help. On September 2, 1986 the Crisis Pregnancy Center of Clinton County opened its doors at 132 1/2 N. Main Street, Wilmington. An August 14 Wilmington News Journal article of that year quoted then director of the pregnancy center, Jan Widman: "We are here to respond to a woman with a crisis pregnancy, to provide guidance and counseling. The girl has the ultimate choice.... [we] are dedicated to giving a woman accurate information to help her make her own decision."

In September of 1990 the pregnancy center was renamed Clinton County Women's Center (CCWC) with the Board of Directors, led by Chairman Doris Caldwell, wanting the name to more clearly reflect the services available to women in Clinton and four surrounding counties.

Over the next two decades CCWC became established as an effective resource for women. The pregnancy center received state recognition from both the Ohio House and Senate, set annual fundraisers such as the Walk 4 Life and Fall Banquet which are still operating today, and gained local financial support and endorsement. During these years, the Center experienced growth and change in both clients and personnel. With such momentum it was soon clear that the organization would need to be housed in a larger facility. On January 4, 2002, CCWC purchased Printer's Choice, Inc. at 815 S. South Street and began renovations that would eventually lead to an Open House in November. By this time, advertising stressed "support services to individuals and families in need."

By 2012, with the addition of an ultrasound unit and an increase in the number of males coming to receive support, the organization once again changed its name (to New Life Clinic) and would soon embark upon another change of location in order to accommodate growth. Today, the New Life Clinic operates out of 100 S. South Street and serves on average 1,000 clients per year, male and female. Services

include pregnancy tests, early ultrasounds, options counseling, parenting classes and support, baby and maternity items, and community referrals. NLC is coming alongside women and men to empower them to make healthy choices regarding their own pregnancies as well as their new lives as parents.

Looking back upon my 6 year tenure as the Director of the New Life Clinic, I can give many names of women, clients and client advocates, teachers and students, employees and prayer warriors, who have encouraged and inspired me. I am blessed to be a part of this extended family. From my vantage point, one woman holds such a consistent and significant presence in this ministry I would be remiss to not mention her by name. That woman is Doris Caldwell, my prayer warrior, my friend, my champion for ALL of human life, my inspiration.

Did you notice the shout out earlier when I mentioned Doris as the Board Chairman in 1990? Well this was just the beginning of her tenure at the pregnancy center and she is still serving on the Board of Directors today! Doris has had numerous roles over the last 30 years from Center Director to fundraising captain to client support to keynote speaker, but she has always been involved. Doris is a hard-working, life-loving, amazing female who encourages me to be the unique woman that I am and to be proud of my gender.

Doris has 4 children, 18 grandchildren, and 23 great-grandchildren who adore her, and her husband, Lloyd, of nearly 60 years is now residing in heaven. She embodies what a wife, mother, and grandmother should be and she is dedicated to serving the young moms and wives in our community who need a helping hand. Just one text sent to her family and friends asking for a one-word description of Doris returned to me a mountain of accolades: dedicated, passionate, relevant, caring, loving, informed, involved, kind, faithful, generous; insightful, full of wisdom, a woman after God's own heart, warm, smart, hard-working, and passion for the Clinic.

There you have it. I can't think of a more deserving woman to consider as I consider women's history month for our local Clinton County. Doris Caldwell is doing her part to encourage and strengthen women who are at their weakest, and I am proud to say that I know her personally, and that our clients at the New Life Clinic are (after 30 years) still reaping the benefit of her passion for LIFE and for women.

Thank you, Doris!

Sherry Weller
Executive Director, New Life Clinic



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Women Soldiers of the Civil War

By DeAnne Blanton

It is an accepted convention that the Civil War was a man's fight. Images of women during that conflict center on self-sacrificing nurses, romantic spies, or brave ladies maintaining the home front in the absence of their men. The men, of course, marched off to war, lived in germ-ridden camps, engaged in heinous battle, languished in appalling prison camps, and died horribly, yet heroically. This conventional picture of gender roles during the Civil War does not tell the entire story. Men were not the only ones to fight that war. Women bore arms and charged into battle, too. Like the men, there were women who lived in camp, suffered in prisons, and died for their respective causes.

Both the Union and Confederate armies forbade the enlistment of women. Women soldiers of the Civil War therefore assumed masculine names, disguised themselves as men, and hid the fact they were female. Because they passed as men, it is impossible to know with any certainty how many women soldiers served in the Civil War. Estimates place as many as 250 women in the ranks of the Confederate army. (1) Writing in 1888, Mary Livermore of the U.S. Sanitary Commission remembered that. Livermore and the soldiers in the Union army were not the only ones who knew of soldier-women. Ordinary citizens heard of them, too. Mary Owens, discovered to be a woman after she was wounded in the arm, returned to her Pennsylvania home to a warm reception and press coverage. She had served for eighteen months under the alias John Evans. (3)

In the post-Civil War era, the topic of women soldiers continued to arise in both literature and the press. Frank Moore's *Women of the War*, published in 1866, devoted an entire chapter to the military heroines of the North. A year later, L. P. Brockett and Mary Vaughan mentioned ladies "who from whatever cause . . . donned the male attire and concealed their sex . . . [who] did not seek to be known as women, but preferred to pass for men." (4) Loreta

Velazquez published her memoirs in 1876. She served the Confederacy as Lt. Harry Buford, a self-financed soldier not officially attached to any regiment.

The existence of soldier-women was no secret during or after the Civil War. The reading public, at least, was well aware that these women rejected Victorian social constraints confining them to the domestic sphere. Their motives were open to speculation, perhaps, but not their actions, as numerous newspaper stories and obituaries of women soldiers testified.

Most of the articles provided few specific details about the individual woman's army career. For example, the obituary of Satronia Smith Hunt merely stated she enlisted in an Iowa regiment with her first husband. He died of battle wounds, but she apparently emerged from the war unscathed. (5) An 1896 story about Mary Stevens Jenkins, who died in 1881, tells an equally brief tale. She enlisted in a Pennsylvania regiment when still a schoolgirl, remained in the army two years, received several wounds, and was discharged without anyone ever realizing she was female. (6) The press seemed unconcerned about the women's actual military exploits. Rather, the fascination lay in the simple fact that they had been in the army.

The army itself, however, held no regard for women soldiers, Union or Confederate. Indeed, despite recorded evidence to the contrary, the U.S. Army tried to deny that women played a military role, however small, in the Civil War. On October 21, 1909, Ida Tarbell of *The American Magazine* wrote to Gen. F. C. Ainsworth, the adjutant general: "I am anxious to know whether your department has any record of the number of women who enlisted and served in the Civil War, or has it any record of any women who were in the service?" She received swift reply from the Records and Pension Office, a division of the Adjutant General's Office (AGO), under Ainsworth's signature.

Despite the fact that the U.S. Army did not acknowledge or advertise their existence, it is surprising that the women soldiers of the Civil War are not better



known today. After all, their existence was known at the time and through the rest of the nineteenth century. Even though some modern writers have considered Seelye and Cashier, the majority of historians who have written about the common soldiers of the war have either ignored women in the ranks or trivialized their experience. While references, usually in passing, are sometimes found, the assumption by many respected Civil War historians is that soldier-women were eccentric and their presence isolated. Textbooks hardly ever mention these women.

The writings of Bell Wiley and Mary Massey are good examples. Wiley wrote at some length of "the gentler sex who disguised themselves and swapped brooms for muskets [who] were able to sustain the deception for amazingly long periods of time." But he later refers to them, indirectly, as "freaks and distinct types." (13) Massey erroneously asserted that "probably most of the women soldiers were prostitutes or concubines." (14) For the most part, modern researchers looking for evidence of soldier-women must rely heavily upon Civil

War diaries and late nineteenth-century memoirs.

It is true that the military service of women did not affect the outcome of campaigns or battles. Their service did not alter the course of the war. Compared with the number of men who fought, the women are statistically irrelevant. But the women are significant because they were there and they were not supposed to be. The late nineteenth-century newspaper writers grasped this point. The actions of Civil War soldier-women flew in the face of mid-nineteenth-century society's characterization of women as frail, subordinate, passive, and not interested in the public realm.

Simply because the woman soldier does not fit the traditional female image, she should not be excluded from, or misinterpreted in, current and future historical writings. While this essay cannot discuss all the soldier-women, their lives and military records, recent chroniclers of the Civil War and women's history have begun to note the gallantry of women in the ranks during the war. (15) Most important, recent works refrain from stereotyping the women soldiers



as prostitutes, mentally ill, homosexual, social misfits, or anything other than what they were: soldiers fighting for their respective governments of their own volition.

It is perhaps hard to imagine how the women soldiers maintained their necessary deception or even how they successfully managed to enlist. It was probably very easy. In assuming the male disguise, women soldiers picked male names. Army recruiters, both Northern and Southern, did not ask for proof of identity. Soldier-women bound their breasts when necessary, padded the waists of their trousers, and cut their hair short. Loreta Velazquez wore a false mustache, developed a masculine gait, learned to smoke cigars, and padded her uniform coat to make herself look more muscular.

While recruits on both sides of the conflict were theoretically subject to physical examinations, those exams were usually farcical. Most recruiters only looked for visible handicaps, such as deafness, poor eyesight, or lameness. Neither army standardized the medical exams, and those charged with performing them hardly ever ordered recruits to strip. That roughly 750 women enlisted attests to the lax and perfunctory nature of recruitment physical checks.

Once in the ranks, successful soldier-women probably learned to act and talk like men. With their uniforms loose and ill-fitting and with so many underage boys in the ranks, women, especially due to their lack of facial hair, could pass as young men. Also, Victorian men, by and large, were modest by today's standards.

Soldiers slept in their clothes, bathed in their underwear, and went as long as six weeks without changing their underclothes. Many refused to use the odorous and disgusting long, open-trenched latrines of camp. Thus, a woman soldier would not call undue attention to herself if she acted modestly, trekked to the woods to answer the call of nature and attend to other personal matters, or left camp before dawn to privately bathe in a nearby stream.(16)

Militarily, the women soldiers faced few disadvantages. The vast majority of the common soldiers during the Civil War were former civilians who volunteered for service. These amateur citizen soldiers enlisted ignorant of army life. Many privates had never fired a gun before entering the army. The women soldiers learned to be warriors just like the men.

The women soldiers easily concealed their gender in order to fulfill their desire to fight. An unknown number of them, like Cashier, Jenkins, and Hunt, were never revealed as women during their army stint. Of those who were, very few were discovered for acting unsoldierly or stereotypically feminine. Though Sarah Collins of Wisconsin was suspected of being female by the way she put on her shoes, she was atypical.(17)

Also unusual were the Union women under Gen. Philip Sheridan's command, one a teamster and the other a private in a cavalry regiment, who got drunk and fell into a river. The soldiers who rescued the pair made the gender discoveries in the process of resuscitating them. Sheridan personally interviewed the two and later described the woman teamster as coarse and the "she-dragon" as rather prepossessing, even with her unfeminine suntan.(18) He did not state their real names, aliases, or regiments.

For the most part, women were recognized after they had received serious wounds or died. Mary Galloway was wounded in the chest during the Battle of Antietam. Clara Barton, attending to the wound, discovered the gender of the soft-faced "boy" and coaxed her into revealing her true identity and going home after recuperation.(19) One anonymous woman wearing the uniform of a Confederate private was found dead on the Gettysburg battlefield on July 17, 1863, by a burial detail from the Union II Corps.(20) Based on the location of

the body, it is likely the Southern woman died participating in Pickett's charge. In 1934, a gravesight found on the outskirts of Shiloh National Military Park revealed the bones of nine Union soldiers. Further investigation indicated that one of the skeletons, with a minieball by the remains, was female.(21) The identities of these two dead women are lost to posterity.

Some soldiers were revealed as women after getting captured. Frances Hook is a good example. She and her brother, orphans, enlisted together early in the war. She was twenty-two years old, of medium build, with hazel eyes and dark brown hair. Even though her brother was killed in action at Pittsburgh Landing, Hook continued service, probably in an Illinois infantry regiment, under the alias Frank Miller. In early 1864, Confederates captured her near Florence, Alabama; she was shot in the thigh during a battle and left behind with other wounded, who were also captured. While imprisoned in Atlanta, her captors realized her gender. After her exchange at Graysville, Georgia, on February 17, 1864, she was cared for in Union hospitals in Tennessee, then discharged and sent North in June. Having no one to return to, she may have reenlisted in another guise and served the rest of the war. Frances Hook later married, and on March 17, 1908, her daughter wrote the AGO seeking confirmation of her mother's military service. AGO clerks searched pertinent records and located documentation.(22)

Other prisoners of war included Madame Collier and Florina Budwin. Collier was a federal soldier from East Tennessee who enjoyed army life until her capture and subsequent imprisonment at Belle Isle, Virginia. She decided to make the most of the difficult situation and continued concealing her gender, hoping for exchange. Another prisoner learned her secret and reported it to Confederate authorities, who sent her North under a flag of truce. Before leaving, Collier indicated that another woman remained incarcerated on the island.(23)

Florina Budwin and her husband enlisted together, served side by side in battle, were captured at the same time by Confederates, and both sent to the infamous Andersonville prison. (The date of their incarceration has not been determined.) Mr. Budwin died there in the

stockade, but Mrs. Budwin survived until after her transfer with other prisoners in late 1864 to a prison in Florence, South Carolina. There she was stricken by an unspecified epidemic, and a Southern doctor discovered her identity. Despite immediately receiving better treatment, she died January 25, 1865.(24)

The women soldiers of the Civil War engaged in combat, were wounded and taken prisoner, and were killed in action. They went to war strictly by choice, knowing the risks involved. Their reasons for doing so varied greatly. Some, like Budwin and Hook, wished to be by the sides of their loved ones. Perhaps others viewed war as excitement and travel. Working class and poor women were probably enticed by the bounties and the promise of a regular paycheck. And of course, patriotism was a primary motive. Sarah Edmonds wrote in 1865, "I could only thank God that I was free and could go forward and work, and I was not obliged to stay at home and weep."(25) Obviously, other soldier-women did not wish to stay at home weeping, either.

Herein lies the importance of the women combatants of the Civil War: it is not their individual exploits but the fact that they fought. While their service could not significantly alter the course of the war, women soldiers deserve remembrance because their actions display them as uncommon and revolutionary, with a valor at odds with Victorian views of women's proper role. Quite simply, the women in the ranks, both Union and Confederate, refused to stay in their socially mandated place, even if it meant resorting to subterfuge to achieve their goal of being soldiers. They faced not only the guns of the adversary but also the sexual prejudices of their society.

The women soldiers of the Civil War merit recognition in modern American society because they were trailblazers. Women's service in the military is socially accepted today, yet modern women soldiers are still officially barred from direct combat. Since the Persian Gulf war, debate has raged over whether women are fit for combat, and the issue is still unresolved. The women soldiers of the Civil War were capable fighters. From a historical viewpoint, the women combatants of 1861 to 1865 were not just ahead of their time; they were ahead of our time.

Suffrage Parade, New York City, May 6, 1912

The suffrage parade was a new development in the fight for women's suffrage in the United States. It was a bold tactic, adopted by suffragists and the more militant suffragettes shortly after the turn of the century. Although some women chose to quit the movement rather than march in public, others embraced the parade as a way of publicizing their cause and combating the idea that women should be relegated to the home. Parades often united women of different social and economic backgrounds. Because they were carried out in public, they also became newsworthy. The media coverage – even when it was negative – helped to spread the suffragists' message. Some states allowed women the franchise earlier, but American women were granted the right to vote nationwide in 1920, under the Nineteenth Amendment to the Constitution.



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Beyond the Bus: Rosa Parks' Lifelong Struggle for Justice

Born in Alabama on Feb. 4, 1913, Rosa Louise McCauley had a determined spirit that was nurtured by her mother and grandparents. She chafed under the strictures of segregation. In 1931, she met Raymond Parks, a politically active barber, and they married in 1932. She joined him in organizing in defense of the nine Scottsboro boys, falsely accused of rape.

Her early writings reveal her "determination never to accept it, even if it must be endured," which led her to "search for a way of working for freedom and first class citizenship." In 1943, she became secretary of the Montgomery branch of the NAACP and continued that work for the next decade. The branch, under the leadership of Parks and E.D. Nixon, focused on voter registration, youth outreach, pursuing legal remedies for black victims of white brutality and sexual violence and defending the wrongly accused. After years of such efforts, she grew increasingly discouraged by the lack of change. In August 1955, she journeyed to the Highlander Folk School in Tennessee, an interracial organizer-training school, for a two-week workshop on school desegregation. The workshop buoyed her spirit.

Parks' writings reveal that she was well aware that her refusal to give up her bus seat to a white passenger meant she might "be manhandled but I was willing to take the chance ... I suppose when you live this experience ... getting arrested doesn't seem so bad." When her arrest on December 1, 1955, sparked a community bus boycott, Parks labored hard to maintain the protest. Part of how the boycott was sustained for more than a year was through an elaborate, labor-intensive car-pool system. For one month, Parks served as a dispatcher, working to sustain the protest and exhorting riders and drivers to keep going. In her detailed instructions to carpool riders and drivers, she wrote, "Remember how long some of us had to wait when the buses passed us without stopping in the morning and evening."

Fired from her job at Montgomery Fair department store a month into the boycott, Parks spent most of 1956 traveling throughout the country, raising awareness and funds for the movement. Letters home during her travels describe how

heady and tiring this work was—meeting Thurgood Marshall, visiting the Statue of Liberty, doing radio interviews and giving numerous speeches.

Her efforts, alongside others in Montgomery, helped turn a local struggle into a national movement. "Our non-violent protest has proven to all that no intelligent right thinking person is satisfied with less than human rights that are enjoyed by all people." In her notes for a Nov. 12, 1956, speech about the bus boycott at a local NAACP chapter, she celebrated the Supreme Court's decision against bus segregation, but saw much work ahead.

Bus desegregation did not alleviate the suffering of the Parks family. Working class and living in the Cleveland Courts Projects, the Parks family had encountered periods of economic trouble before, but the toll that Parks' arrest took on her family was enormous and far-reaching. Her bus protest plunged her family into a decade of health and economic instability, which is reflected in their 1955-1965 tax returns.

Both Rosa and Raymond lost their jobs early on in the boycott, developed health problems and never found steady work in Montgomery again. In the summer of 1957, they were forced to move to Detroit, to join her brother and extended family. For a time she worked as a hostess at the inn at Virginia's Hampton Institute. But an ulcer and unhappiness about being away from her family made her leave the position and return to Detroit in late 1958. In 1959, they moved into the Progressive Civic League to serve as the building's caretakers but had difficulty making the rent or even affording a refrigerator. Her health worsened, landing her in the hospital. She would not work steadily again until 1965.

But Parks' political efforts continued. She protested housing segregation, participated in Detroit's Great March for Freedom and attended the March on Washington in August 1963. The following year, Parks volunteered on John Conyers' first congressional campaign for Michigan's newly redrawn first district, on a platform of "Jobs, Justice, Peace." After he was elected to Congress, Conyers hired her to work in his Detroit office, where she remained until her retirement

in 1988.

Like Montgomery, Detroit was plagued with racial and social inequity. Her work with constituents in Rep. Conyers' office, along with her own experiences in the city, made her keenly aware of the issues—from poverty and job discrimination to lack of access to health care and housing segregation to school inequality and police brutality.

Rosa Parks' political activities in Detroit were even more diverse than they had been in Montgomery. She worked on prisoner support, helped run the Detroit chapter of the Friends of SNCC (the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee) and took part in the growing movement against U.S. involvement in Vietnam. Attending scores of events and meetings across the city, she traveled regularly to take part in the growing Black Power movement across the country. When asked by a reporter from *Sepia* magazine in 1974 how she managed to do so much, she demurred, "I do what I can."



In 1987, she and long-time friend Elaine Steele started the Rosa and Raymond Parks Institute for Self Development, which continues today to educate youth about the struggle for civil and human rights.

On a drugstore bag found in her collection, an elderly Rosa Parks doodled over and over, "The Struggle Continues." Hers lasted a lifetime.

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Sister Nurses in the Spanish-American War

By Mercedes Graf

Although thousands of patriotic women rushed off to care for the sick and wounded during America's bloody Civil War (1861 - 1865), only a very few were trained in the medical arts—and they were Catholic nuns.¹

Doctors, of course, preferred to have trained nurses caring for the sick and wounded. But having nuns as nurses was even better because “the special characteristics of their lives enabled them to function as a cohesive group, to accept difficult physical and material circumstances, and to relate to the soldiers in a nonsexual, even-handed manner.”² Religious women also came from a hierarchical structure where they were used to self-discipline and understood self-sacrifice and obedience to authority. The presence of these well-prepared individuals demonstrated the advantages of having trained nurses on duty during wartime.

Nearly four decades later, in 1898, U.S. soldiers went into battle again in the Spanish-American War, which marked America's debut as a world power seeking to expand its influence. After the outbreak of war in April 1898, US forces quickly subdued the Spanish in the Philippines, then moved on to Cuba. Within months, they overwhelmed the Spanish, and Theodore Roosevelt gained fame that would lead him to the White House.

Despite the lessons learned in the Civil War, the government had taken no concerted steps toward establishing a skilled nursing service to care for the sick and wounded during wartime. Although enlisted men from the US Army Medical Department served in the Hospital Corps, the numbers were insufficient, as there were less than 800 men— 99 hospital stewards, 100 acting stewards, and 592 privates. On June 1, 1898, Congress increased the number of hospital stewards to two hundred.³ But most of the Hospital Corps men who enlisted or who were detailed from combat regiments had little or no proper training as nurses. And when

their regiments were moved, detailees were called back to duty.

The war with Spain was quickly demonstrating the important need for trained nurses as hastily constructed army camps for more than twenty-eight thousand members of the regular army were devastated by diarrhea, dysentery, typhoid fever, and malaria— all of which took a much greater toll than did enemy gunfire.

As a result, the need for trained nurses was heightened— and the work of the sister nurses in the Civil War was not forgotten.

The Need for Nurses

While the importance of well-trained female nurses had been demonstrated in civilian hospitals for at least two decades before the Spanish-American War, there were still many military and medical men who questioned whether a field hospital was any place for a woman. Although the surgeon general of the army initially opposed having women in the field, he believed that that they would be needed as nurses and dietitians at base and general hospitals. He obtained authority to appoint both men and women nurses as civilian employees under contract with pay allotted at thirty dollars a month, meals, quarters, and traveling expenses. At the same time, Dr. Anita Newcomb McGee, vice-president general of the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) offered to examine all applications referred by the government from women. Even as the surgeon general of the army immediately accepted this offer, his counterpart of the navy joined him, and DAR associates were appointed to help in the selection process. The enormity of this work should not be underestimated, as during the month of May 1898 alone, applications were received from 2,353 women.⁴

All applications were forwarded to Dr. McGee, who was left free to set her own standards.⁵ To be placed on the eligible list, a nurse must have been graduated from a training school

and have the endorsement of the present superintendent of that school or the one under whom she was trained. The original age limit was thirty to fifty years, but exceptions soon had to be made in view of the huge demand for nurses. A requirement that had not been demanded at the outset, but which became immediately apparent, was a physician's certificate stating that the applicant was well and strong enough for army duty. By August 31, 1898, there were almost a thousand nurses under contract, with the demand still growing in view of the terrible epidemic of typhoid fever that raged that summer in the camps.

A different sort of recruitment effort was made in July 1898. Under the direction of the surgeon general of the army, Mrs. Namah Curtis had been sent in July to secure the service of immune colored women (living mostly in the South), who could serve as nurses at Santiago, Cuba, to tend yellow fever patients.⁶ These women were selected for the job mainly because they had already survived yellow fever, but the majority of them were not trained nurses.⁷

Sisters Answer the Call

As a result of their work in the Civil War, religious sisters were recognized for providing skilled nursing services. In view of the urgent need for medical assistance in the summer of 1898, it was no surprise when the government called for every nursing sister who could be spared. Official government records indicated that the various orders furnished around 250 sister nurses, with the Daughters of Charity (originally referred to in the United States as Sisters of Charity), providing the majority of nurses.⁸ Although members of other orders were represented, their numbers were considerably less.⁹

This article focuses on the different orders of nursing sisters and on their experiences and difficulties encountered during the Spanish-American War. Each section below will describe a particular group and their contribu-



The Sisters of Mercy, Baltimore, served as nurses at Camp Thomas, Chickamauga Park, Georgia, during the Spanish-American War. These five are Sisters M. de Sales Prendergast, M. Loyola Fenwick, M. Celestine Doyle, M. Mercedes Weld, and M. Nolasco McCole. (Courtesy, Sisters of Mercy, Baltimore)

tions, starting with the Daughters of Charity, which sent more than two hundred women, and continuing to the smaller orders, which sent anywhere from four to just over a dozen sisters.

Daughters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul, Emmitsburg, Maryland

On April 23, 1898, the Daughters of Charity, sometimes referred to as the Cornette Sisters because of their large white linen headgear, offered their services to the government much as they had done in the Civil War.¹⁰ During that conflict, they had compiled a proud record of tending the wounded at Satterlee Hospital in Philadelphia, where more Union wounded had been treated than at any other hospital during the war. Now, with their official entry into another conflict, sisters were called from the various missions throughout the country, and the motherhouse in Emmitsburg became the focal point for these nursing sisters. Originally one hundred sisters were promised, but in view of the desperate plea for more help, just over two hundred women eventually tended the sick and wounded.¹¹ As a result, “many of those later sent were not so thoroughly qualified as were the Sisters in the early parties.”¹² Those who had limited nursing experience assisted the more experienced when needed.