

In Their Own Words

Women of Brown County, South Dakota, in World War I

“Never in my life . . . have I felt that I was so useful and so much needed,” wrote South Dakota nurse Margaret Ferguson from the front lines of France in World War I.¹ The prospect of serving a greater purpose spurred many women, buoyed by patriotic fervor and the lure of adventure, to volunteer for the war effort. Women of Brown County, South Dakota, were among the many thousands who joined in war work, both at home and overseas. Their duties ranged from nursing and medical practice to clerical posts, entertainment, and canteen work. An exploration of how these women came to serve and what they experienced, particularly as shared through the letters of those serving abroad, provides a firsthand sense of what war service meant for the lives of female, middle-class Americans from the rural heartland.²

The stories of the servicewomen from Brown County collectively illustrate the life-changing effects of the war. Their histories unfolded within the context of a militant and nationalistic wartime culture and tragic loss and destruction. The Great War exacted an enormous toll

1. *Aberdeen Daily American*, 26 July 1918. Ferguson was Beadle County’s Red Cross visiting nurse, a public health service organized by the Red Cross Seal Commission. Timothy J. Ferguson, “Margaret Eileen Ferguson, R.N. A.R.C.,” unpublished manuscript, 2011, copy in author’s possession.

2. For context on American women’s service in World War I, see Dorothy Schneider and Carl J. Schneider, *Into the Breach: American Women Overseas in World War I* (New York: Viking, 1991); Lettie Gavin, *American Women in World War I: They Also Served* (Niwot: University Press of Colorado, 1997); Susan Zeiger, *In Uncle Sam’s Service: Women Workers with the American Expeditionary Force, 1917–1919* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1999); Mary T. Sarnecky, *A History of the U.S. Army Nurse Corps* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999), pp. 80–132; Kimberly Jensen, *Mobilizing Minerva: American Women in the First World War* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2008); Judith Bellafaire and Mercedes Herrera Graf, *Women Doctors in War* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2009).

on the lives of those it touched. For many of the more than two million American soldiers fighting overseas, the grueling ordeal of trench warfare had enduring traumatic consequences. For the twenty-five thousand women serving abroad, the war involved risk and inflicted trauma, as well. The onset of the global influenza pandemic in the fall of 1918 compounded the hazards, proving deadlier than the conflict itself. Despite the terrible devastations of war and ongoing gender inequities inside and outside the military, many servicewomen experienced a new sense of liberation. They were able to interact with diverse people, cultures, and environments, and they embraced their role as independent American women contributing crucial skilled labor to the cause. Whether they pursued professional careers after the war or followed more traditional domestic paths, they did so with a broadened worldview and heightened conception of their abilities and contributions.³

When war broke out in Europe in 1914, America essentially expected to stay uninvolved. Over the next three years, public opinion sustained a gradual and decided shift. Concerted propaganda efforts, punctuated with dire stories of German atrocities and aggression, had their persuasive effect, and by the time the United States entered the war in April 1917, neutrality had given way to strong support for the Allies and popular construal of the war as a struggle for the survival of democracy.⁴ The residents of Brown County quickly rallied in solidarity

3. For statistics on American soldiers in World War I, see U.S., War Department, *Report of the Secretary of War*, 1918, 1:7, 12. The estimate of twenty-five thousand women serving overseas comes from Schneider and Schneider, *Into the Breach*, pp. 287–89. For the number of deaths of American women overseas, the Women's Overseas Service League's estimate is 348. Helene M. Sillia, *Lest We Forget: A History of Women's Overseas Service League* (Washington, D.C.: The League, 1978), p. 2. Gavin, in *American Women in World War I*, pp. 246–80, identifies 263 women who died overseas. The influenza pandemic caused at least 50 million deaths worldwide and some 675,000 deaths in the United States. See Jeffery K. Taubenberger and David M. Morens, "Influenza: The Once and Future Pandemic," *Public Health Reports* 125 (2010 Supplement 3): 17, 19; Niall P. A. S. Johnson and Juergen Mueller, "Updating the Accounts: Global Mortality of the 1918–1920 'Spanish' Influenza Pandemic," *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 76 (Spring 2002): 105–15.

4. The war initially involved the Allied Powers of France, Russia, and the United Kingdom and the Central Powers of Germany and Austria-Hungary. News of the sinking of the British liner *Lusitania* and other German submarine attacks as well as

ty to the cause. In the county seat of Aberdeen, American flags adorned public buildings, automobiles, and the persons of many of the town's sixteen thousand citizens. A Loyalty Day parade on 19 April drew large crowds despite biting cold and rain. Over the course of the war, nearly seventy-five hundred Brown County men registered for the draft, with over ten percent of that number seeing military service. A local newspaper boasted that the Aberdeen recruiting station's per-capita enlistments repeatedly ranked the highest in the nation. The proportion of Brown County women who enlisted as nurses topped demographic expectations, as well. In Brown County, as throughout the nation, women filled positions vacated by men who had left to fight. Many women also actively engaged in Red Cross relief efforts and projects of the local chapter of the Woman's Committee of the Council of National Defense.⁵

Newspapers enthusiastically stepped up to publicize local efforts and rouse the public to its patriotic duty. The role of the media in the war was pervasive and multifaceted, both directing and reflecting the temper and outlook of the nation. The Aberdeen newspapers, like those throughout the country, mingled patriotic encouragement and propaganda with war reports and firsthand accounts of those who served. "Send us your letters from soldiers," the *Aberdeen Daily American* repeatedly urged its readers. Among the correspondence published in the *Daily American* and other local newspapers were those of

stories of actual and alleged atrocities in Belgium and elsewhere influenced American reactions.

5. *Aberdeen Daily American*, 14, 20 Apr. 1917, 9 Aug. 1918; *Aberdeen Daily News*, 25 June 1917; *An Honor Roll Containing a Pictorial Record of the Gallant and Courageous Men from Brown County, So. Dak., U.S.A., Who Served in the Great War, 1917-1918-1919* (Saint Paul, Minn.: Buckbee-Mears Co., 1919), pp. 22, 174. The variety of Red Cross projects undertaken included meeting all troop trains to hand out food, cigarettes, and magazines; making over two million surgical dressings and thousands of flu masks; and knitting and sewing tens of thousands of items for soldiers, hospital patients, and refugees. The Woman's Committee of the Council of National Defense, led by Elizabeth Browne of Aberdeen, sold several hundred thousand dollars in Liberty Loan bonds, registered women for war work, and recruited student nurses to fill vacancies left by nurses in military service. The group also held food drives, a child-welfare campaign, and a nursing course to prepare women for home and emergency nursing. *Aberdeen Daily News*, 6 Dec. 1918; *Honor Roll*, pp. 11, 170-72.

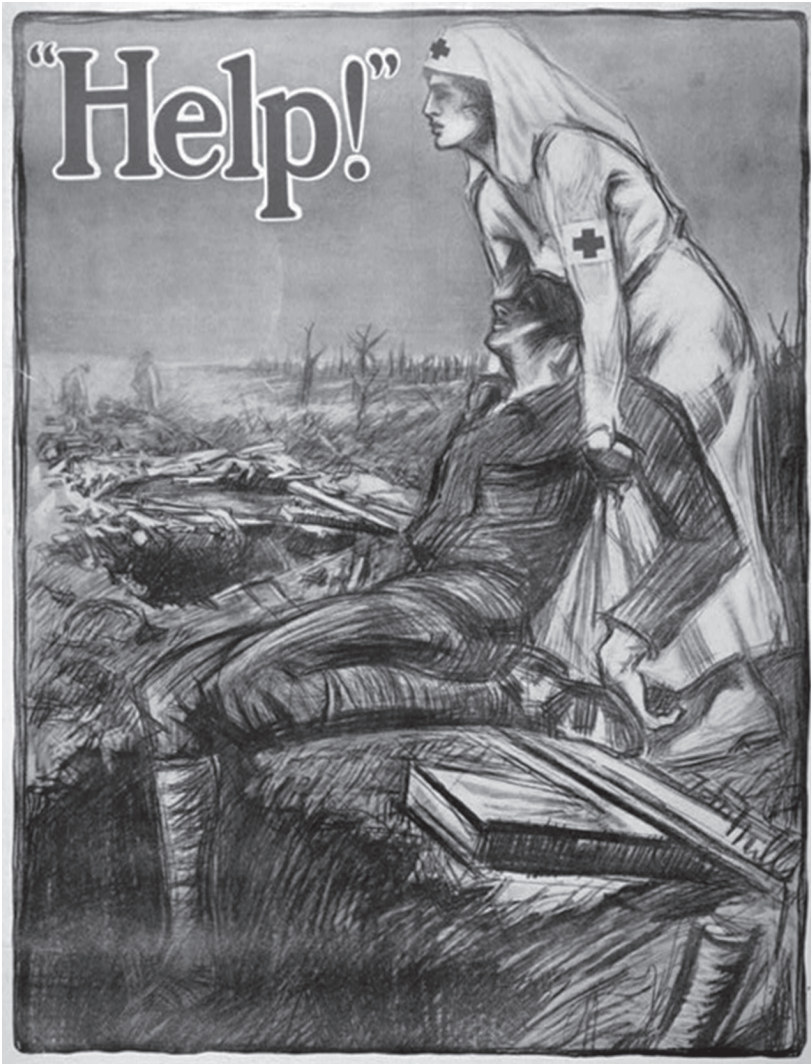
nurses and other women in service. These letters, though edited and filtered by the women, the military, family and friends, and newspaper staff, supply significant information about women's war work from their immediate perspectives.

Women volunteered for multiple reasons. Patriotic appeals and propaganda reinforced keen desires to serve those in need, find a larger purpose, seize new opportunities, and, for the most adventurous, place themselves in the thick of the action. Backgrounds, occupations, and skills, as well as venturing spirits, drove the process of who signed up and were accepted for service. These women volunteers displayed determination and a genuine dedication to the cause, as they faced no draft or stigma if they failed to volunteer. Their pre-war work, for the most part, took gender-accepted forms such as nursing or secretarial positions. With the onset of war came recognition from government and military officials that these traditional roles involved competencies essential to the war effort, and the women found themselves called to service. Once they answered that call, they were able, indeed even obliged, to forge new paths to meet the unconventional situations arising out of warfare.⁶

From the war's beginning, Brown County women were determined to serve. The presence of Saint Luke's Hospital School of Nursing in Aberdeen boosted the county's numbers of servicewomen. Five Brown County graduates of Saint Luke's traveled overseas during the war, while a number of others served in military camps in the United States.⁷ Saint Luke's alumna Rose Lenore Ness brimmed with resolve. The twenty-five-year-old anesthetist worked in the offices of Aberdeen

6. For an overview of women's reasons for entering war service, see Schneider and Schneider, *Into the Breach*, pp. 14–20. See also Zeiger, *In Uncle Sam's Service*, pp. 3, 174.

7. For information on Saint Luke's Hospital School of Nursing, see Susan Carol Peterson and Courtney Ann Vaughn-Roberson, *Women with Vision: The Presentation Sisters of South Dakota, 1880–1985* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988), pp. 201–2. Besides Rose Ness, Saint Luke's graduates who served overseas were Mary Sullivan (1911), Mary Ellen (Mae) Kenny (1914), Gertrude Mylet (1915), and Valentine Melzark (1917). Other Brown County women serving abroad were Aberdeen nurse Frances Cranker and dietician Ruth Louise Cassels of Groton. See *Honor Roll*, pp. 21–24; Mary Sullivan File, Historical Nurse Files, 1916–1959 (hereafter cited HNF), Records of the American National Red Cross, 1881–2008, Record Group 200, National Archives and Records Administration; *Willow Lake News*, 4 July 1919; *Aberdeen Daily News*, 15 Feb., 27, 28 Sept.



Patriotic appeals such as this Red Cross recruiting poster prompted women to answer the call and volunteer for the war effort.

1918, 21 May 1928, 12 Nov. 1931, 24 May 1932, 7 Apr. 1955; *Columbus (Nebr.) Daily Telegram*, 11 Sept. 1918; *Seattle (Wash.) Daily Times*, 22 Jan. 1957; *Groton Independent*, 30 May 1916, 21 Aug. 1919, 28 Oct. 1920, 19 May 1921; Columbia University, *Teacher's College Record* 20 (Mar. 1919): 186.

doctors R. D. Alway and J. D. Whiteside and chaired the Red Cross nurses' recruiting committee in Brown County. Her hopes for aiding the war effort seemed dashed, however, when she failed her physical in December 1917. The question of her medical fitness hinged on two factors. She had a slight heart disorder as a result of rheumatic fever and some decreased mobility stemming from an accident in October 1916. She had fallen through a clothes chute in an attic to the basement three stories below, fracturing her leg and ankle.⁸

Ness wrote directly to Red Cross Nursing Service head Jane A. Delano to press her case. Several specialists had examined her, she declared, and assured her that her heart would give her no trouble. Her ankle caused no problems, either, beyond a slight limp when tired. "Will you please let me have another chance and let me be examined by some other or several physicians," Ness entreated. "I'll do any kind of service, or go anywhere you may be pleased to send me to—only let me have a tryout please."⁹ She at first received discouraging signals. Reversing the decision would probably be impossible, Clara Noyes, director of the Bureau of Field Nursing Service informed her; and, in any case, the War Department was not at that time sending nurses as anesthetists. Ness's perseverance ultimately paid off, however. Granted a second physical examination in May 1918, she passed and found herself suddenly cleared to go overseas as an anesthetist.¹⁰

Even for those with robust health, successful admittance to overseas work required persistence and the ability to meet specific qualifications required by the State Department, Red Cross, and other organizations that allowed women to apply. Those accepted were typically single, upper- or middle-class white women in their mid-twenties or older. They were barred from serving abroad if they had a brother or close relative in the military or any relief organization overseas.¹¹ Nurses ap-

8. Elizabeth Dryborough to Jane A. Delano, 22 Dec. 1917, Dora E. Thompson to Clara D. Noyes, 1 Apr. 1918, and Nursing Service Physical Examination, Rose L. Ness Allen File, HNF; *Aberdeen Daily News*, 11 May 1910, 28 Oct. 1916; *Freeman Courier*, 9 Nov. 1916.

9. Ness to Delano, 15 Mar. 1918, Rose Ness Allen File.

10. Noyes to Ness, 20 Mar., 29 May 1918, and American Red Cross Service Application Form, *ibid.*

11. Lavinia L. Dock, et al., *History of American Red Cross Nursing* (New York: Macmillan, 1922), p. 322; Nancy O'Brien Wagner, "Red Cross Women in France during World War I," *Minnesota History* 63 (Spring 2012): 6; *Northern Division Bulletin* (15 Aug. 1918): 1.

plying through the Red Cross filled out forms, gathered references and credentials from the schools where they had trained (which had to be associated with a hospital of over fifty beds), obtained doctors' certificates of health, and wrote an essay demonstrating their understanding of the American Red Cross Nursing Service. Established in 1909, the service functioned as the reserve of the United States Army and Navy Nurse Corps. Enlistment requirements eased somewhat as the call for nurses became more urgent. Throughout the war, women in the military served without rank. Only with legislation in the 1940s would they achieve military rank with commensurate pay and benefits.¹²

12. U.S., Surgeon General's Office, *Report of the Surgeon General, U.S. Army, to the Secretary of War*, 1912, p. 179; Portia Kernodle, *The Red Cross Nurse in Action, 1882–1948* (New



Rose Ness overcame reservations about her medical fitness and went on to serve overseas in France.

Women physicians wishing to serve during World War I faced greater challenges. Their choices were limited by the government's refusal to commission them as doctors. A few settled for service as contract surgeons. They received no rank or benefits but at least were allowed to treat soldiers if the army needed their specialties and no qualified male physicians could be found. Others volunteered as civilians with organizations such as the Red Cross and cared for European civilians, including refugees and war orphans.¹³

Aberdeen doctor Goldie Eleanora Zimmerman's introduction to war service did not come by choice. The daughter of German-born immigrants, Zimmerman grew up in Aberdeen and graduated from the University of Illinois College of Physicians and Surgeons in 1911, one of a handful of women in her class. Three years later, the twenty-six-year-old physician arrived in Berlin to pursue specialized work in children's medicine. The outbreak of war in the summer of 1914 upended her plans. The German doctors were called away to war service, Zimmerman wrote her brother in a letter recapped in the *Aberdeen Daily News*, and placed the wards of the children's hospital under the supervision of herself and another American doctor. In September, after much difficulty, she managed to secure passage back to America, traveling in steerage on an overcrowded Dutch ocean liner. Zimmerman, though, could not ignore the plight of children, and in August 1918, she would head back to the war zone, volunteering as a civilian doctor.¹⁴

York: Harper, 1949), p. 52; Susan C. Peterson and Beverly Jensen, "The Red Cross Call to Serve: The Western Response from North Dakota Nurses," *Western Historical Quarterly* 21 (Aug. 1990): 325–26, 331–32; Zeiger, *In Uncle Sam's Service*, p. 43. Nurses received relative rank in 1920 and full rank with the passage of the Army-Navy Nurses Act of 1947 and Women's Armed Services Integration Act of 1948. Jensen, *Mobilizing Minerva*, pp. 139–41. For a summary of the various ways nurses served during World War I, whether through the Red Cross, Army Nurse Corps, or both, see Sarnecky, *History of the U.S. Army Nurse Corps*, p. 428. Nurses also served in the Navy Nurse Corps, primarily stateside.

13. For information on women contract surgeons, see Bellafaire and Graf, *Women Doctors at War*, pp. 34–36; Jensen, *Mobilizing Minerva*, pp. 84–87.

14. *Aberdeen Daily American*, 19 Apr. 1910, 13 Feb. 1915, 8 Aug. 1916; *Aberdeen Daily News*, 10 Sept. 1914; *Alumni Record of the University of Illinois* (Urbana-Champaign: University of Illinois, 1921), p. 182.



Dr. Goldie Zimmerman's war experience began unexpectedly while she studied in Berlin. She later served in Corbeil, France, caring for children and refugees.

Some women chose to serve overseas before the United States entered the conflict. Eager to participate and possessing a wayfaring spirit, Edna May Pryer arrived in France in the summer of 1916. A 1906 graduate of Northern Normal and Industrial School in Aberdeen and a Boston-trained nurse, Pryer served at the military hospital in Saint Valery-en-Caux, a small French village on the English Channel. There, under the direction of Dr. Ralph Fitch from Rochester General Hospi-

tal in New York, the staff tended wounded soldiers, refugees, and patients from the surrounding area. After a brief return to America, Pryer would rejoin Dr. Fitch and his staff in the summer of 1917, reassigned from Saint Valery to l'Hôpital Complémentaire No. 2 in Evreux.¹⁵

War work, especially for those with a degree of wealth and leisure, could offer escape from boredom. For Aberdeen native Marie Helen Jewett, a desire to fill her time with some useful work, combined with a strong service ethic, inspired her to volunteer. Jewett was a 1906 graduate of Mount De Chantal Academy, a Catholic girls' school in Wheeling, West Virginia, where she studied music. She was the daughter of prosperous entrepreneur Harvey Chase Jewett, Sr., who, in May 1917, was elected chairman of the newly organized Brown County Red Cross chapter. Anxious to do her part, Marie Jewett initiated surgical dressings classes in Aberdeen after completing training in Minneapolis, Minnesota. When the opportunity arose, she promptly volunteered to serve nearer the theater of war and was selected as one of fifteen American women assigned to the Surgical Dressings Service Department of the American Red Cross in Paris. The women were to work without pay and be responsible for their own travel expenses, board, and lodging.¹⁶

For other women, an interest in political and world affairs was a driving motivation to seek service abroad. Aberdeen's Gertrude Shoemaker was strongly patriotic and civically engaged. As a suffragist, she joined women workers at the local polls supporting passage of women's right to vote when that issue appeared on the state ballot. In addition to her role as clerk of the Aberdeen Board of Education, Shoemaker was secretary of the Woman's Committee of the Council of National Defense in Brown County. In that position, she compiled and reported the results of a countywide survey of five thousand women indicating how they were willing to assist in war work. She was proud of the large response and the women's readiness to serve. Shoemaker applied to

15. *Aberdeen Daily American*, 7 June 1906; *Aberdeen Daily News*, 5 Jan., 13 Oct., 7 Nov. 1917; Dock, et al., *History of American Red Cross Nursing*, pp. 195, 198.

16. *Aberdeen Daily News*, 30 May 1906, 13 Oct., 5 Nov. 1917; *Aberdeen Daily American*, 15 May, 14 Oct. 1917; *The Mount Newsletter* (Nov. 1978): 15. See also Joan Anderson, "Dakota Images: Harvey C. Jewett," *South Dakota History* 21 (Winter 1991): 445.

Older than most volunteers accepted for Red Cross service overseas, Ellen McArdle would go on to nurse soldiers in a converted hotel near Paris.



fill a clerical position with the Red Cross and received her orders to embark for Switzerland in the fall of 1918.¹⁷

Women who had passed their early youth received preference for war service. Nurse Ellen Cecelia McArdle, at the age of fifty-one, was older than most when the Red Cross accepted her for overseas service in the summer of 1918 but was deeply committed to doing her part. The Massachusetts native and graduate of the New England Hospital for Women and Children had been a visiting Red Cross nurse for Brown County, her position funded through the sale of Red Cross Christmas seals by schoolchildren. The length of time she could spend in a particular county depended on the number of seals sold, and Brown County was proud of having the highest totals in the state.¹⁸

17. *Aberdeen Daily News*, 7 Nov. 1916, 12 Apr., 30 Nov. 1918. South Dakotans approved woman suffrage on 5 November 1918. Nationally, the Nineteenth Amendment granting women the vote passed in the United States Senate on 4 June 1919 and was ratified in August 1920.

18. *Ibid.*, 22 Dec. 1917, 13 Nov. 1918; *Aberdeen Daily American*, 24 May 1918; Application for Enrollment, Ellen Cecelia McArdle File, HNF.

Overseas, the war brought many challenges and opportunities as women ventured into unfamiliar environments and experiences. In navigating new situations and risks and performing vital work, they gained confidence and independence. From the start, the women made a point of taking danger and discomfort in stride. The hazards began with the ocean passage. Pryer, in a letter to her mother printed in the *Aberdeen Daily News*, described the anxieties of fellow passengers upon entering the submarine zone. Her ship, the French liner *Espagne*, was forced to change course to evade a German sea raider.¹⁹ Marie Jewett reported on her own ocean crossing, writing to her family on her way to France in November 1917: “We are now in the danger zone and each gun has two constant attendants and men on lookouts and life boats are ready. . . . All the necessary precautions are being taken. Some of the men have formed a vigilance committee, which sees that all the rules are obeyed. No smoking on deck, no search lights, etc.” Jewett slept on deck to escape her tiny, airless, four-person cabin. She felt no fear during the journey, she insisted, attributing that emotion to “only a few of the nervous, not overly courageous souls [who] spend their time discussing the submarine danger and fitting on their life saving suits.”²⁰

The women were prepared to make the best of every situation they encountered. Aberdeen nurse Mamie Eva Hornbeck displayed her resilience in a letter she sent to her sister, Bulia Hornbeck, from “muddy France.” Recounting her “nice trip over,” Hornbeck wrote: “I was sick all night before going on board and for four days, then after that, I slept all day and all night without eating. . . . Then as soon as I got up and around I was seasick. . . . I had to make good time on board as soon as I felt good. I feel like a hundred dollars now and am going to keep it up.” Hornbeck had received her orders to go overseas while serving at Camp Dodge, Iowa, and wrote in October 1918 from Base Hospital No. 62 in Mars-sur-Allier. She was looking forward to being “quite comfortable” after plumbing and lighting were functioning. “Our ward has two French patients and I have quite a time talking with them,” she related.

19. *Aberdeen Daily News*, 5 Jan. 1917.

20. *Ibid.*, 6 Dec. 1917.

I have learned a number of words today and am going to take lessons from an instructor here. There are Red Cross hospital trains bringing patients from other hospitals every day. Every one has been over the top.”²¹

Dr. Goldie Zimmerman found satisfaction in her civilian medical work overseas. Upon arriving in France in the summer of 1918, she was stationed south of Paris in the small manufacturing town of Corbeil, where she cared for children and refugees at the American Red Cross dispensary. The work load was great, as many of the French doctors

21. Ibid., 15 Nov. 1918. Hornbeck continued nursing after the war. In 1930, she married Otto Knight, a widower with three children. She died 16 August 1967 in Los Angeles. California, Death Index, 1940–1997, ancestry.com



Mamie Hornbeck approached war service with an adventurous spirit, relayed in her letters from France to her sister in Aberdeen.

had been mobilized and the dispensary served the whole town and surrounding villages. "The babies of Corbeil do not die any more since the American ladies came," a grateful mother attested. French soldiers, too, expressed their appreciation, thankful for the care their family members received. Zimmerman's work continued until the French took over in June 1919.²²

Devotion to work and the knowledge of being needed allowed servicewomen to endure privations with equanimity and sustained them even when war experiences became overwhelming. Edna Pryer chronicled her experiences in several letters to her mother, Caroline Lawrence. From Evreux, Pryer wrote of the many scarcities war imposed, including shortages of sweets, fuel, and water for baths. The French people were prohibited from letting hot water circulate in the pipes, she said, and endured many "meatless" and "cakeless" days.²³ On 16 October 1917, she reported, "It is quite cold now. . . . We have little oil heaters but don't use them yet as petrol is so scarce and expensive, too. It is hard to get wood and coal. We have coal cards, chocolate cards, bread cards, sugar cards, and I don't know what other kinds."²⁴ Conditions were not so bad, though, Pryer hastened to add, considering the country had been at war three years. At Christmas, the wards were decorated, and each patient received a stocking with gifts, as well as cakes and wine.²⁵

In February 1918, Pryer noted that reverberations from the German bombardment of Paris were plainly felt in Evreux, about a two-hour ride from the city. At her hospital, they covered the lights with blue shades and darkened the windows as much as possible.²⁶ The heavy fighting was dispiriting, Pryer wrote in April, but she could take heart

22. Quoted in Dock, et al., *History of American Red Cross Nursing*, p. 800. See also Margaret Farwell to Dr. Lucas, 25 Aug. 1918, in Elizabeth Ashe, *Intimate Letters from France, and Extracts from the Diary of Elizabeth Ashe, 1917-1919* (San Francisco: Bruce Brough Press, 1931); *Aberdeen Daily News*, 17 July 1919; *Sioux Falls Daily Argus-Leader*, 17 June 1919; Doane Robinson, *South Dakota, Sui Generis: Stressing the Unique and Dramatic in South Dakota History*, 3 vols. (Chicago: American Historical Society, 1930), 2:128.

23. *Aberdeen Daily News*, 31 Oct. 1917.

24. *Ibid.*, 11 Dec. 1917.

25. *Ibid.*, 27 Mar. 1918.

26. *Ibid.*, 26 Mar. 1918.

in the critical service she performed. The hospital had just treated a convoy of badly wounded British soldiers. "The first day I was on duty 21 hours and crawled into bed just as dawn was breaking," she stated. "Out of 63 hours I had four hours sleep. We operated about twenty hours the first day . . . and twelve hours the next day. . . . Easter came and went and we scarcely knew it. I think we should have forgotten it entirely but for the fact that the church bells rang about all day."²⁷ While at the hospital, Pryer was decorated for her work in the operating room.²⁸ In her letters home, she praised Dr. Fitch's orthopedic skill in repairing the battered arms and legs of the wounded soldiers. "I don't believe I will ever be contented in the United States," she declared.²⁹

Awareness of the importance of the work they performed gave servicewomen a sense of purpose and strength. "I would not have missed the experience for anything," Ellen McArdle wrote to her boss, Brown County school superintendent Richard N. Axford, shortly after reaching France in September 1918. "I am near Paris and will be glad to tell you more when I see you. The interesting parts will have to be kept for the telling later. The censor would scratch out just what you would want to know."³⁰ McArdle was assigned to American Red Cross Military Hospital No. 6, Pavillon de Bellevue, a treatment center for gassed patients. Located just outside Paris, the imposing structure had originally been a fashionable hotel. In the summer of 1918, the Red Cross rented it from American dancer Isadora Duncan, who had purchased and used it for her dancing school before the war.³¹ McArdle wrote about the patients she nursed, almost all of whom suffered from gas

27. *Ibid.*, 21 June 1918.

28. *Ibid.*, 15 Feb. 1919.

29. *Ibid.*, 11 Dec. 1917. *See also* *ibid.*, 31 Oct. 1917. For more on the Evreux hospital, *see* Dock, et al., *History of American Red Cross Nursing*, pp. 539–40, 609–10. In January 1919, the Red Cross assigned Pryer to the hospital in Neuilly, near Paris, designated for auxiliary personnel of the American Expeditionary Forces. While there, she had "one rather important patient," head of the American Red Cross Nursing Service Jane Delano, who was a distant cousin on Pryer's mother's side. Delano died of acute mastoiditis at Savenay, France, on 15 April 1919. Pryer to Lawrence, *Aberdeen Daily News*, 15 Feb. 1919. *See also* *ibid.*, 15 May 1919.

30. *Aberdeen Daily News*, 13 Nov. 1918.

31. Alfred E. Cornebise, *Soldier-Scholars: Higher Education in the AEF, 1917–1919* (Philadelphia, Pa.: American Philosophical Society, 1997), p. 106; Dock, et al., *History of*



No. 1. VALLIE MELZARK—Entered American Red Cross Service Aug. 1, 1918, and was transferred from the American Red Cross service to the U. S. Army Nurse Corps Sept. 27. She arrived overseas Nov. 9 and was assigned to duty at Brest, Mesves, Neuf Chateau, where she remained until the end of the war. She returned to the United States in April, 1919, and was discharged May 20. Miss Melzark is the daughter of William Melzark.

No. 2. ROSE NESS—Left July, 1918, for New York to do war nursing and sailed a week later for France. She was assigned to Evacuation Hospital No. 114 at Chateau Thierry, and later was transferred to the Toule Sector. She was offered a place on the Commission for Balkan Civilian Relief Work, but gave up the opportunity for assignment to Red Cross Hospital No. 101 at Nauilly. In February, 1919, she returned to the United States.

No. 3. EDNA PRYER—Three years of overseas duty are to the credit of Miss Pryor, and she was one of two American nurses who went with the International Red Cross on an expedition to Montenegro to establish hospitals there. During her service in France she was stationed at Hospital Complimentaire No. 2 and Neuilly Hospital at Paris. Miss Pryor signed for a three months' period of service in Montenegro and served there in the summer of 1919. She is the daughter of Mrs. I. E. Lawrence of Aberdeen.

No. 4. MISS MINNIE ROSSMAN—Graduate nurse from St. Luke's Hospital, Aberdeen, as a member of the class of 1917. She entered service in the U. S. Army Nurse Corps in April, 1918, and was assigned to duty at Camp Kearney, Cal. Miss Rossman remained on war nursing duty from that time until released from service in February, 1919.

No. 5. MARY SULLIVAN—Graduate nurse from St. Luke's Hospital, in the class of 1910. She went overseas with the American Red Cross in August, 1917, and was stationed at Paris, American Red Cross Hospital No. 1, until September, 1918. She was transferred then to civilian work, in which she remained up to the time she sailed for the United States. She landed in New York Aug. 11, 1919.

No. 6. RUTH ANNE WENZ—Graduate dietitian from City and County Hospital, Minneapolis, as a member of the class of 1919. She entered war nursing service in September, 1918, and was assigned to duty at the government hospital, Fort Bainard, N. M. Later she was transferred to St. John's Hospital, Cheyenne, Wyo. Miss Wenz was discharged in April, 1919. She is the daughter of B. F. Wenz of Aberdeen.

After her time in France, Edna Pryer (center) continued nursing overseas. She and other Brown County women were recognized in a commemorative volume produced after the war.

poisoning or burns. Immediately upon arriving, she had begun caring for wounded soldiers brought from the front. "After seeing how they are burned, and knowing a little of what they suffer I should be very sorry to know that the Germans were not thoroughly beaten with some of their own weapons," she stated.³²

McArdle was initially in charge of a nine-bed ward where the worst cases were placed and had to put aside her distress over the appalling conditions of the soldiers. "I can assure you it was a fright," she wrote. "When they began to get well it was not so bad of course. They called themselves the 'lucky nine' . . . but not all got well. I won't write about that. Later I went out to the big ward and there was waiting until they were all moved out. The dressings on the burned cases were frightful, arms, back, legs, sometimes faces, and after a big dressing one was completely exhausted—only one didn't say so, and kept right on." Her ward was on the first floor in what was originally the dining room, she guessed, with one side all mirrors. The ward had fifty-six beds on both sides, with nine down the middle of the room, and was one of several wards and adjoining barracks and tents that made up the hospital. McArdle closed her letter with hopes of a quick ending to the war. The French were living in hard circumstances, she commiserated, and "everywhere the women are in mourning."³³

Sympathy, vital skills, and increasing confidence were qualities that marked the women serving overseas. From her surgical dressings post in Paris, Marie Jewett deeply empathized with France's grieving women. In a letter home soon after her arrival in November 1917, she noted that she had attended two morning Masses. "I hated to leave," she wrote, "when it was so impressive to see soldiers and their mother, or wives, or girls, kneeling together and so many in deep mourning. Everyone seemed so very serious and it occurred to me that soon we in America would be having the same experience." It was now late evening, she continued, and tomorrow she would start work. Though somewhat apprehensive, Jewett eagerly anticipated contributing to

American Red Cross Nursing, pp. 610–11; American Red Cross Nursing Service card, Ellen Cecelia McArdle File, HNF.

32. *Aberdeen Daily News*, 13 Nov. 1918.

33. *Ibid.*

the effort. "They need me so badly I am sure I will be of some little use," she wrote. "It is grand to be part of it all and feel that [I am] doing a little anyway towards helping out."³⁴

Jewett's role was to supervise women workers in producing a supply of surgical dressings "something near the demand." She was pleased to report that the American Red Cross commissioner, Major James H. Perkins, had told the supervisors he was as glad to see them as he was the soldiers. After meeting with Gertrude Austin, head of the American Surgical Dressings Association, Jewett wrote that she and her team were to begin at once, putting in "at least ten hours a day and some on night shifts" to produce two hundred thousand "front packets" to be distributed to soldiers. The front packet, Jewett explained, consisted of several sterilized gauze dressings, a pad, and two muslin bandages wrapped in a muslin covering and then in heavy paper sealed with paraffin to ensure resistance to "rain or dampness, gas, dirt, or anything."³⁵

The demand for dressings continued to grow, as did Jewett's confidence in her leadership abilities. "I really don't believe I ever spent such a busy week in all my life," she wrote her father in the spring of 1918. The previous day, the workers had cut 210 bolts of cotton, 80 bolts of gauze, 60 bolts of muslin, 7,500 bias muslin bandages, and 6,000 muslin sacks. The spring offensive had so increased the demand for dressings "that we haven't time to think," she reported. "All the American heads of departments were called in consultation and we were told that we must turn out 380,000 front parcels at once. . . . We were asked if we would work harder and we all agreed. Next day I had to make estimates for my department, which is the fountain head of the whole thing." Her workers were dedicated, Jewett related, and had even worked on Easter Sunday. "But this awful need of dressings can't last long and this dreadful drive can't either," she ardently hoped.³⁶

While in Paris, Jewett met Colonel William A. Hazle, who lived on her block in Aberdeen. "I told him that I didn't believe I could ever go back to doing nothing," she wrote.³⁷ In the summer of 1918, Jewett took

34. *Aberdeen Daily News*, 6 Dec. 1917.

35. *Ibid.*

36. *Aberdeen Daily News*, 4 May 1918.

37. *Ibid.*



Thousands of volunteers at home and abroad were needed to help fill the large demand for surgical dressings and other medical supplies.



THIS IS WHAT YOUR CONTRIBUTION TO THE UNITED WAR WORK FUND IS DOING—To the men who were wounded in the great victory of democracy over autocracy your money is bringing the best of care and all the little comforts that the men so badly need. Miss Anderson and Miss Marie N. Jewett of Aberdeen, S. D., are shown here distributing chocolate and cigarets in a convalescent ward in France.

(Photograph by the Signal corps, A. E. F., from Farmer Murphy, Tribune correspondent in Paris.)

In her canteen work, Marie Jewett (left) distributed chocolate and cigarettes to soldiers in a convalescent ward in France. This photograph appeared in the 8 December 1918 issue of the *Chicago Tribune*.

a brief leave of absence to help manage a canteen, assisting and feeding American and English soldiers.³⁸ She returned in the fall to her surgical dressings supervision work but soon responded to a call for volunteers to work in another Red Cross canteen, identified by the *Aberdeen Daily American* as “in the thick of the fighting where the Americans are pushing forward northwest of Verdun.”³⁹

For nurses at the front, the dangers and excitement could be intense. Nurse Rose Ness, on her arrival in France in August 1918, soon found herself stationed close to the front lines. After a brief stay in Par-

38. *Aberdeen Daily News*, 12 June, 19 July 1918. A photograph of Jewett distributing chocolates and cigarettes appeared in the 8 December 1918 *Chicago Tribune*.

39. *Aberdeen Daily American*, 3 Nov. 1918.

is, she was assigned to Evacuation Hospital No. 114 at Chateau Thierry and then transferred to Base Hospital No. 82 in the Toul Sector. She remained there through the Saint Mihiel and Argonne drives and later cared for influenza and pneumonia cases.⁴⁰ Ness had many gripping tales to tell, “wonderful as well as awful,” declared the *Aberdeen Daily News*, of her time at the evacuation hospital. “Amid the shot and shell of the Hun,” the newspaper waxed dramatic, “a small group of doctors and nurses worked unceasingly throughout each night for the relief of wounded shell shocked and gassed American boys.”⁴¹ Nurse Margaret Ferguson, in a letter reprinted in the *Aberdeen Daily American*, conveyed a martial spirit as she described her assignment to help transport wounded soldiers from the front. “I will be glad to be right on the firing line,” she told Lulu Wanzer, president of the Red Cross Seal Commission of South Dakota. “I suppose it is a terrible taste I have acquired but every one here feels that way if they have a spark of fighting blood in them. . . . I am so glad for an opportunity to do my share in this war for humanity and my great regret is that I too can’t shoulder a gun.”⁴²

War service opened new cultural vistas and experiences. For Beth Romans, a 1916 graduate of Aberdeen High School, the war brought the opportunity to serve as a member of the entertainment section of the Young Men’s Christian Association (YMCA). Trained in dance, dramatic reading, and voice, she engaged in canteen entertainment work in the eastern United States in the spring and summer of 1918 and shipped overseas in October of that year. During her service, Romans received accolades for her performances and offers from French companies to remain in the country.⁴³

40. Ibid., 5 Nov. 1919; *Honor Roll*, p. 24.

41. *Aberdeen Daily News*, 13 Feb. 1919.

42. *Aberdeen Daily American*, 10 May 1918.

43. Romans returned to the United States in July 1919 and attended the University of Kansas. In 1929, she married James Bartlett Leary, son of a wealthy New York shipbuilding family. She died in Miami-Dade County, Florida, in 1941. *Aberdeen Daily News*, 1 June 1916, 31 Oct. 1918; *Aberdeen Daily American*, 31 Aug. 1918; *Lawrence (Kan.) Daily Journal*, 31 Jan. 1920; *New York Times*, 25 July 1929; *Cleveland (Ohio) Plain Dealer*, 28 July 1929; *America’s Successful Men of Affairs: An Encyclopedia of Contemporaneous Biography*, 2 vols. (New York: *New York Tribune*, 1895–1896), 1:385–88; Florida Death Index, 1877–1998, ancestry.com.

Women serving abroad found themselves relishing their exposure to diverse situations and people. Gertrude Shoemaker shared her experiences in letters to friends and family printed in the Aberdeen newspapers. "Things were very exciting for about two weeks after we came," she wrote to Helen Lentz upon arriving in Bern, Switzerland, as a clerical worker for the American Red Cross Bureau of Prisoners' Relief. Troops were mobilized due to strikes instigated by Russian Bolsheviks in the country. German, French, and Belgian soldiers filled the market square facing the pension where she lodged, and the cavalry was stationed in front of Red Cross headquarters.⁴⁴ English and French officers roomed in her pension, she noted, and "I have the pleasure of sitting next at table to an Australian captain, interned here and working with the British Red Cross. Then there is a nice motherly German woman, and her adopted son, who is an Italian, and the first violinist at the Kursaal, an amusement place just up the hill from here. We are a cosmopolitan crowd. Every day our dining room reads the news from English newspapers, French newspapers, German papers and American, when we can get them."⁴⁵

Shoemaker's overseas position gave her a firsthand appreciation of the impact of the Red Cross relief efforts of which she was an integral part. An article in *Red Cross Magazine* described operations. Clerical staff maintained constant communication with prisoners in Germany, while a large work force organized and packed food, tobacco, clothing, and supplies stored in warehouses and assured their proper transportation into Germany.⁴⁶ Shoemaker was enjoying her work and the people to the fullest extent, she wrote, and was glad she had come. She rejoiced in the release of the American prisoners of war. "You never saw such happy men as those on the trains that brought them out of Germany," she proclaimed. "The vigor of the handshakes, and such yells. I am sure if there had been a roof over that portion of the railroad tracks

44. *Aberdeen Daily News*, 11 Feb. 1919.

45. *Ibid.*

46. *Aberdeen Daily News*, 6 Nov. 1918, 4 Feb. 1919; J. Benjamin Dimmick, "Our Work in Switzerland," *Red Cross Magazine* 14 (Jan. 1919): 56–58. *See also* "The Work in Switzerland," *Red Cross Bulletin* 3 (6 Jan. 1919): 7.

it would have flown off. Those few days when the trains were passing through Berne were worth crossing the Atlantic for, even in peril of the deadly subs.” The gratitude the former prisoners of war expressed for the services of the Red Cross made Shoemaker proud of her part in the work and prompted her to assure “the faithful, loyal people back home” how much their efforts and perseverance meant. “The lives of thousands of fine American boys as well as of many citizens of the unfortunate small countries of Europe have been saved as the direct result,” she asserted. Shoemaker also wrote of the ravages of the influenza pandemic, hoping it would soon be over everywhere.⁴⁷

Back home, Brown County was hit hard by the epidemic, registering 118 flu-related deaths, the second highest of the counties in South Dakota.⁴⁸ The newspapers chronicled the rapid spread of the disease. “All churches, all the public and parochial schools of the city, all theaters, dance halls and other places where the public is wont to assemble shall close and remain closed,” the mayor ordered on 11 October 1918.⁴⁹ Saint Luke’s Hospital played a central role in the crisis, setting up and overseeing emergency hospitals in Aberdeen and throughout the county. Sixteen nurses from Saint Luke’s took charge of the improvised hospitals. Schoolteachers and other volunteers stepped up to assist the nurses.⁵⁰ These women, like their military counterparts, found that the experience, grueling and distressing as it was, gave them a sense of usefulness and united purpose. Nurse Lillian Zimpher resourcefully presided at Graham Hall, converted from a dormitory at Northern Normal in Aberdeen. Assisting was Harriet Carpenter, a school principal. “We’re getting along just fine,” she maintained. “I picked some good helpers. . . . We just sail right along with the kitchen work, and fixing diets for the patients is new and fascinating work.”⁵¹ Several nurses and volunteers contracted influenza, the newspaper reported, but all

47. *Aberdeen Daily News*, 11 Feb. 1919.

48. “1918 Flu Pandemic in South Dakota Remembered,” history.sd.gov/archives/forms/spanishflu/Spanish%20Flu%20Article.pdf; *Aberdeen Daily News*, 18 Oct. 1918.

49. *Aberdeen Daily News*, 11 Oct. 1918.

50. *Ibid.*, 5 Nov. 1918.

51. Quoted *ibid.*, 22 Oct. 1918.

recovered. In mid-November, restrictions were lifted, but a resurgence of the disease in early December prompted an order (generally disregarded) to wear flu masks in public places. After the second wave, new cases soon dropped off.⁵²

Brown County nurses serving in military camps and hospitals throughout the United States also rose to the occasion as the flu epidemic struck.⁵³ Aberdeen resident and navy nurse Belle Granger, stationed at the Mare Island Naval Shipyard in Vallejo, California, described the outbreak in her letters home: "The plague is dreadful. . . . This afternoon fifty-eight came in at once. . . . The nurses are working twelve and fourteen hours a day . . . and in their tired out condition are very susceptible." Granger grieved over the deaths and suffering but also found professional satisfaction in her nursing experience: "I like it awfully well. Pneumonia is so interesting. . . . Some of the boys are not very sick. All goes well unless complications set in."⁵⁴ The flu proved fatal for one Brown County nurse. Twenty-four-year-old Naomi Kate Templin, a graduate of Saint Luke's, died of the disease on 6 October 1918 while serving at Fort Sheridan, Illinois.⁵⁵

The servicewomen who escaped the deadly outcomes of war and flu pandemic carried their experiences and broadened perceptions into their postwar lives. While many of the gender-liberating opportunities of the war were temporary, an expanded sense of the world and of the value of their contributions was not. For some, that enhanced perspective transitioned into the traditional roles of marriage and raising a family. Others resumed pre-war careers or pursued new professional paths. Some chose to continue their service and transcultural experiences abroad.

52. *Ibid.*, 16 Dec. 1918; *Aberdeen Daily American*, 17 Nov., 3, 24 Dec. 1918.

53. Brown County women were stationed in California, Colorado, Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, New Mexico, North Carolina, Ohio, Washington, and Wyoming. *Honor Roll*, pp. 21–24; *Aberdeen Daily News*, 31 May, 16 Oct., 7 Nov. 1918, 11 Mar. 1921, 11 Nov. 1931, 5 Apr. 1932.

54. *Aberdeen Daily News*, 19 Oct. 1918. *See also* *ibid.*, 22 Feb. 1918, 28 Feb. 1977.

55. *Ibid.*, 7 Oct. 1918. For more on nurses' roles in the crisis, *see* Arlene W. Keeling, "'Alert to the Necessities of the Emergency': U.S. Nursing during the 1918 Influenza Pandemic," *Public Health Reports* 125 (2010 supplement 3): 105–11.

No. 1. BELLE W. GRANGER—Graduate nurse from the City and County Hospital, Minneapolis, as a member of the class of 1914. After entering service in the U. S. Army Nurse Corps, Miss Granger was sent to Base Hospital No. 29 at Mare Island, Cal., serving there until transferred to San Diego, Cal. She remained in war service until after the winter of 1919. She entered service in 1917. Miss Granger is the daughter of C. S. Granger of Aberdeen.

No. 2. HAZZLE GREENO—Saw nine months' actual service as a war nurse. Miss Greeno enlisted from Aberdeen, April 1, 1918, and was first on duty at Camp Kearney, Cal. She was transferred, as a volunteer, Oct. 1, 1918, to Camp Beauregard, La., to help in controlling the severe influenza epidemic. She was released from service Jan. 1, 1919, and received official discharge Jan. 28, following. Miss Greeno is a daughter of H. M. Greeno of Amherst, S. D.

No. 3. JOSEPHINE HOILIEN—Graduate nurse from St. Luke's Hospital as a member of the class of 1914. Miss Hoilien entered service in April, 1918, and was assigned to duty at Camp Kearney, Cal. She served there until transferred to Camp Beauregard, La., to aid in controlling the severe epidemic of influenza there. She was released from service in January, 1919. Miss Hoilien is a daughter of O. E. Hoilien of Aberdeen.

No. 4. MARY E. KENNY—Entered service in the U. S. Army Corps Aug. 12, 1918, and was first assigned to duty at Camp Sherman, Ohio, Base Hospital. She left for service overseas Nov. 25, 1918, landing at Brest, France, from where she was soon assigned to Base Hospital No. 99 at Hyeres, France. She returned to the United States June 19, 1919, and was discharged July 8. Miss Kenny is a graduate nurse from St. Luke's Hospital, Aberdeen, in the class of 1914. She is a daughter of T. F. Kenny, Willow Lake, S. D.

No. 5. MYRTLE KLABUNDE—Graduate dietitian from City and County Hospital, Minneapolis, as a member of the class of 1918. She entered war nursing service in September, 1918, and was assigned to duty at the base hospital at Camp Lewis, Wash. Later she was transferred to Merritt Hospital at Oakland, Cal. Miss Klabunde is the daughter of Mrs. S. M. Klabunde of Aberdeen.



Belle Granger (top) nursed influenza patients while stationed at Mare Island Naval Shipyard in Vallejo, California.

With the signing of the armistice and the end of hostilities in November 1918, new futures beckoned. Edna Pryer seized the opportunity to travel through war-torn Europe. She visited, among other cities, Cannes, Nice, and Monte Carlo and toured many battle-scarred areas, including the devastated town of Rheims. "They are so courageous the way they set to work to do an almost impossible thing," she wrote of the town's cleanup efforts. She provided a sketch of her trip to the Hindenburg Line of trenches nearby, writing, "We wandered through them and over the battlefield for a long time. We went down into one or two dugouts and saw just how the men lived." Many remains of battle were still lying around, including shells, helmets, hand grenades, guns, and knapsacks. A dead German lay in one of the trenches. "They evidently hadn't the time to bury him," Pryer surmised, "and there he was with still some flesh on his bones and hair on his skull." The day, she observed, "was one of those blue-gray days that we have so much in France, with the sun shedding a few faint rays now and then, as if it were ashamed to shine too brightly on this sad scene." The sight of German prisoners of war along the road triggered feelings of both pity and animus, heightened by the sight of crosses marking the graves of French soldiers.⁵⁶

In June 1919, Pryer began serving in Montenegro as part of an International Red Cross mission. She was excited to work as one of two Americans among a multinational group of doctors and nurses charged with starting a hospital to care for sick refugees. The other American was Helen Kerrigan, an Irish-born nurse from New York, with whom Pryer had bonded during their years of shared service in France. "We really are very fortunate to be chosen to go," Pryer wrote home. "The unit is splendid, and the different languages they all talk is remarkable." Because none of the doctors and few of those in her unit spoke English, "I'll have to use French myself," she declared. "It is nice to be with another people and get their language and ways of doing things."⁵⁷ After her time in Montenegro, Pryer was appointed, in 1920, as a member of the Serbian Relief Committee unit at Krushevats, Serbia. She subse-

56. *Aberdeen Daily News*, 15 Feb. 1919.

57. *Ibid.*, 26 July 1919. See also *Aberdeen Daily American*, 12 June 1919.

quently served as a nurse in Rheims, working on behalf of the American Fund for French Wounded. Following her return to the United States, she returned to Europe many times throughout her life.⁵⁸

Marie Jewett traveled home in late January 1919. After the signing of the armistice, the surgical dressings rooms in Paris had been converted to make flu masks and then closed on 1 January. Jewett had harbored thoughts of starting a factory upon her return, but the venture never materialized. On 30 April 1919, she married Major Carroll Owen Bickelhaupt. The two had known each other from childhood, and meetings in France had renewed their friendship and kindled a romance. They moved to New York, where Major Bickelhaupt became an executive, and later vice president, at AT&T. His service in World War II led to his promotion to brigadier general. The couple raised two daughters.⁵⁹

Rose Ness was welcomed back to Aberdeen in February 1919. There she joined the American Legion, apparently becoming the post's first female member. Ness continued to choose international experiences. In August 1921, she married Dr. Eustace A. Allen, superintendent of an American hospital in Almirante, Panama. They had met while stationed in France and later worked together in Birmingham, Alabama, where Ness headed a hospital maternity division. The couple lived in Panama and eventually moved to Georgia. In 1947, Rose Allen was elected national president of the auxiliary to the American Medical Association.⁶⁰

Ellen McArdle returned to the United States in the summer of 1919. She resumed her service as visiting nurse for Brown County and was

58. U.S., Department of State, Passport Applications, 1906–1925, National Archives Microfilm Publication M1490, roll 1263, certificates 55126–55499, 18 June 1920–18 June 1920, and roll 1965, certificates 168226–168599, 12 May 1922–12 May 1922; New York, Passenger Lists, 1820–1957, ancestry.com. Pryer died 31 October 1975 in Santa Barbara, California. California, Death Index, 1940–1997, ancestry.com.

59. *Aberdeen Daily News*, 4 May 1918, 4 Feb., 30 Apr. 1919, 17 May 1954; *New York Times*, 17 May 1954. Marie Jewett Bickelhaupt died 18 November 1977. *Rochester (N.Y.) Democrat and Chronicle*, 19 Nov. 1977.

60. *Aberdeen Daily American*, 14 Feb., 5 Nov. 1919; *Aberdeen Daily News*, 18 Oct. 1920; *Aberdeen Journal*, 7 July 1921; *Augusta (Ga.) Chronicle*, 10 June 1947; *Atlanta City Directory*, 1924 (Atlanta, Ga.: Atlanta City Directory Co., 1924), p. 174. Rose Ness Allen died 18 May 1979. Georgia, Death Index, 1919–1998, ancestry.com.



Wartime appeals asked women to give of their time and efforts, but many of those who volunteered also gained valuable work experience and a broadened world view.

supplied with an automobile for school and home health-care visits. She became state supervisor of the Red Cross public health nurses, served as president of the South Dakota Nurses' Association, and successfully proved up on a homestead in Fall River County. McArdle later managed small hospitals and a convalescent home. In World War II, then in her mid-seventies, she again offered her services should the Red Cross need her.⁶¹

61. *Aberdeen Daily News*, 23 Sept. 1919; *Aberdeen Journal*, 5 Aug. 1922; R. Esther Erickson, *Nursing History in South Dakota* (Sioux Falls, S.Dak.: South Dakota Nurses' Association, 1973), p. 124; patent nos. 874592 and 874593, U.S., Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management, General Land Office, Land Patents, Fall River Co., S.Dak., glorerecords.blm.gov; McArdle to Mary Beard, 5 Apr. 1942, Ellen Cecelia McArdle File, HNF.

Shoemaker remained in Europe for two years after the armistice. In September 1919, as work in Bern wound down, her international experience expanded further with her transfer to Geneva.⁶² There she took an active interest in the political situation. She attended the first assembly of the League of Nations in November 1920 and heard several prominent delegates speak. Among the highlights for Shoemaker were Fridtjof Nansen, Arctic explorer from Norway, committed to getting Russian prisoners in Germany back to their home country; Ignacy Paderewski, Polish prime minister and pianist; and Lord Robert Cecil, active in the formation of the League of Nations. "The attitude of the whole conference seemed to be 'let's wait and see what the United States is going to do' and from all appearances they are still waiting," Shoemaker observed.⁶³

Shoemaker ended her overseas service in Prague, Czechoslovakia, where she was a bookkeeper for the recently founded League of Red Cross Societies. She returned to the United States in March 1921 and continued with clerical work, including service as secretary for the Teachers Association in Los Angeles, California.⁶⁴ America did not yet know what the war had meant to the people of Europe, where families were weakened by starvation and scarcity of work, Shoemaker asserted soon after arriving home. She described visiting a school in Austria where children were being fed from the European Children's Fund administered by Herbert Hoover, head of the American Relief Administration. "They seemed to think I was something to worship, because I was an American, and they were so grateful," she wrote.⁶⁵

Goldie Zimmerman built a pediatrics practice in Sioux Falls upon her return from France. Decades would pass before women doctors

62. *Aberdeen Daily American*, 12 Sept. 1919.

63. *Aberdeen Daily News*, 24 Mar. 1921.

64. *Aberdeen Daily American*, 6 June 1920; U.S., Department of State, Passport Applications, 1906–1925, National Archives Microfilm Publication M1490, roll 1068, certificates 170750–171125, 12 Feb. 1920–13 Feb. 1920; *Aberdeen Daily News*, 24 Mar. 1921; Los Angeles, Los Angeles Co., Calif., in U.S., Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *Fifteenth Census of the United States, 1930*, National Archives Microfilm Publication T626, roll 159, sheet 50A. Shoemaker died 29 Sept. 1961. California, Death Index, 1940–1997, ancestry.com.

65. *Aberdeen Daily News*, 24 Mar. 1921. See also *ibid.*, 4 Feb. 1919.

achieved real progress in equalizing their roles in military service. In her own career, Zimmerman made headway for women through her active involvement in her chosen field. She pursued postgraduate work in children's medicine at the University of Minnesota and later traveled back to Europe for extended study. As a pioneering pediatrician in South Dakota, Zimmerman established a free children's clinic. She presided over numerous medical and professional associations and organizations, wrote articles for medical journals, and authored a report on children's health in South Dakota.⁶⁶ Her status as a woman was an issue on occasion, she related, with one doctor telling her he had "no use for women in medicine."⁶⁷ A 1948 newspaper profile highlighted Zimmerman's career, estimating that she had cared for some ten thousand children. After thirty-plus years of service, she remained dedicated to her practice. "I'd still rather take care of children," she stated, "than anything else in the world."⁶⁸

Zimmerman's course may have been exceptional in terms of breaking boundaries, but the Brown County women who served during World War I were exposed to widened possibilities, even as full gender equality eluded them. Societal parameters and expectations persisted, but these women had embarked on new paths with heightened confidence and purpose. Those stationed overseas discovered new roles for themselves as they honed professional skills, coped in unfamiliar environments, formed enduring relationships, and absorbed diverse cultures. They valued the appreciation they received and developed a deepened sense of autonomy and public engagement. The war brought tragic losses for millions, and pressure to embrace nationalis-

66. *Sioux Falls Daily Argus-Leader*, 29 Oct. 1927, 9 Dec. 1931, 2 June 1938, 12 Nov. 1952; Goldie E. Zimmerman, "American Academy of Pediatrics Study of Child Health Services in South Dakota," *South Dakota Journal of Medicine and Pharmacy* 2 (Sept. 1948): 405; "Women in Medicine," *South Dakota Journal of Medicine and Pharmacy* 12 (June 1959): 242; Robinson, *South Dakota*, Sui Generis, 2:127–28; *Lead Daily Call*, 10 Oct. 1948.

67. Nancy Recker, *An Institution of Organized Kindness* (Sioux Falls, S.Dak.: Sioux Valley Hospital, 1996), p. 9.

68. *Lead Daily Call*, 10 Oct. 1948. Upon her retirement, Zimmerman relocated to Missoula, Montana, where she died on 6 October 1971. She was buried in Aberdeen. *Sioux Falls Argus-Leader*, 7 Oct. 1971.

tic and martial attitudes was pervasive. In the midst of the destruction and bellicosity, many women were able to forge their way to new levels of independence and experience. The stories of their wartime experiences, especially as seen through their letters, shed a light on their expanding world.

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On the covers: Through posters and other appeals, the American Red Cross called on women to volunteer their talents to aid the Allied effort in World War I. In this issue, Lisa Lindell looks at the war experiences of Brown County women through their letters home, many of which appeared in the Aberdeen newspapers. Artwork by Haskell Coffin (front) and Thomas Tryon (back).

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