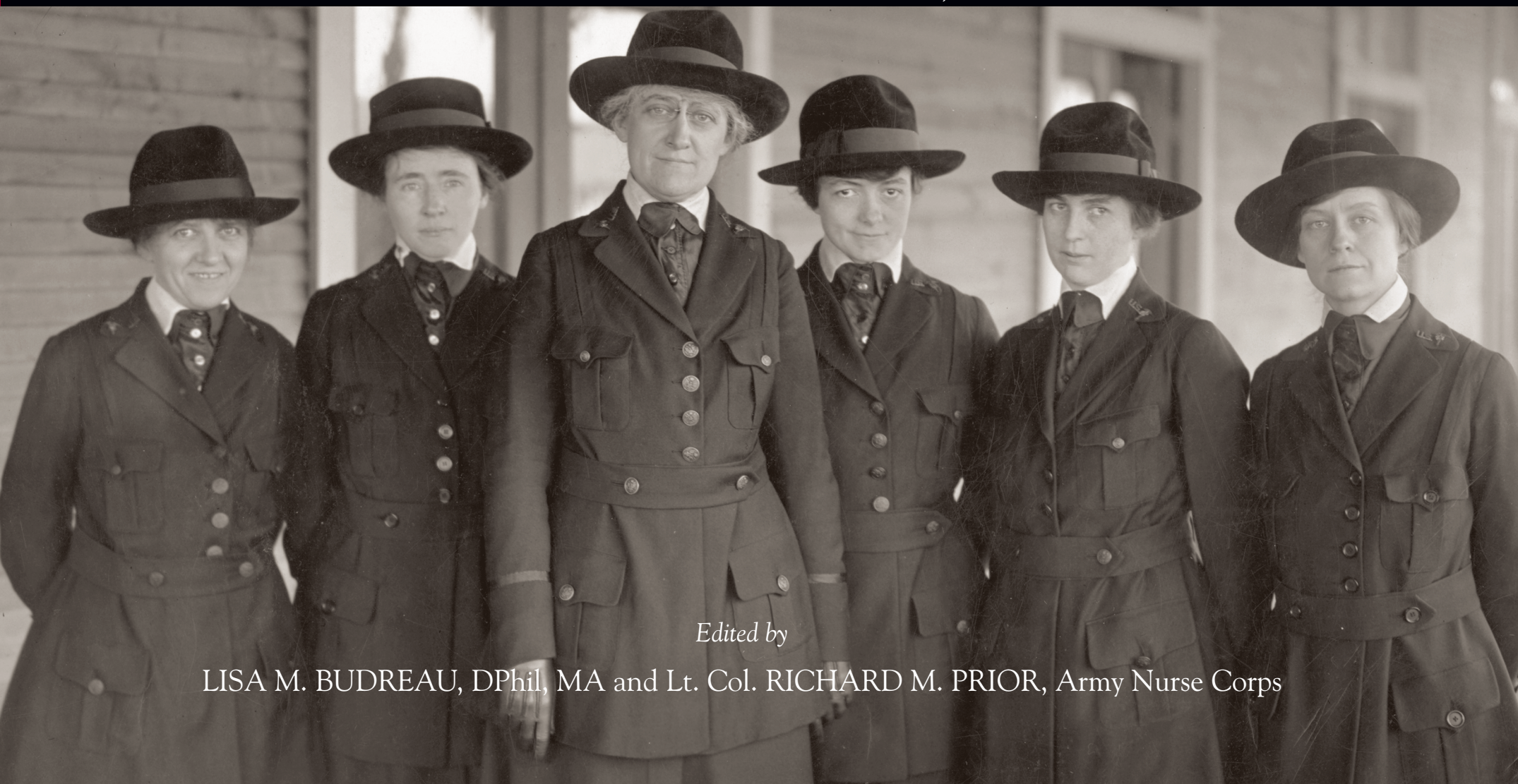
A Commemorative Tribute to Military Nursing in World War I

Answering THE CALL

THE U.S. ARMY NURSE CORPS, 1917–1919



Edited by

LISA M. BUDREAU, DPhil, MA and Lt. Col. RICHARD M. PRIOR, Army Nurse Corps

Answering THE CALL

Answering THE CALL

THE U.S. ARMY NURSE CORPS, 1917–1919

A Commemorative Tribute to Military Nursing in World War I

Edited by
LISA M. BUDREAU, DPhil, MA and
RICHARD M. PRIOR, Lt. Col., Army Nurse Corps

Office of Medical History
OFFICE OF THE SURGEON GENERAL
United States Army, Falls Church, Virginia

Editorial Staff

Editor	Lisa M. Budreau, DPhil, MA
Co-Editor	Lt. Col. Richard M. Prior, USA
Creative Director/Production Manager	Christine Gamboa-Onrubia, MBA, Fineline Graphics LLC
Senior Volume Editor	Joan Redding

Published by the Office of The Surgeon General, Department of the Army, United States of America
Borden Institute, Walter Reed Army Medical Center, Washington, DC 20307-5001

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Answering the call : the U.S. Army Nurse Corps, 1917-1919 : a
commemorative tribute to military nursing in World War I / edited by
Lisa M. Budreau and Richard M. Prior.
p. cm.
1. World War, 1914–1918—Medical care—United States. 2. United
States. Army Nurse Corps—History. 3. Military nursing—United
States—History—20th century. I. Budreau, Lisa M. (Lisa Mary), 1957-
II. Prior, Richard M.

D629.U6A65 2008
940.4'75—dc22
2008060150

Printed in the United States of America

15 14 13 12 11 10 09 08 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2
First Printing

Photo opposite title page: Hospital tents at Mobile Hospital No. 2, Auteuil, Paris, July 1, 1918.

Contents

Foreword | vii
Tribute | viii
Editor's Note | xi
Preface | xii
Introduction | xv

I. The Army Nurse Corps | 1
Historical Background | 3
Chief Nurses | 4

II. The Red Cross Solution | 15
The Army Nurses Corps Goes Over There! | 17
The Army Medical Department and the Red Cross | 27
The Red Cross Hospitals | 28
The Army Nurse in England | 45

III. Stateside Nursing | 47
The Army School of Nursing | 49
Training | 61
African American Nurses | 65

IV. On the Battlefield | 67
Buddy Aid | 69
Litter Bearers | 71
Ambulances | 76
Field Hospitals | 80
Mobile Hospitals | 83
Evacuating the Wounded | 91
Evacuation Hospitals | 97
Hospital Trains | 105
Camp Hospitals | 113

V. Behind the Lines | 127
Quarters and Living Conditions | 129
Leisure | 135
In the Operating Room | 152
Central Medical Department Laboratory | 168
Disease | 175
Death | 186
Hospital Centers | 197
Convalescence | 211

VI. Victory! | 217
Farewell to France | 219
Awards and Citations | 224

Summary | 236
Acknowledgements | 237
Bibliography | 238

Foreword

ONLY SEVENTEEN YEARS AFTER THE ESTABLISHMENT of the Army Nurse Corps, America entered into a global conflict known as World War I. It was a short period for us, less than two years until the Armistice in 1918, but the demands on nurses were profound. During this period, the ANC grew from 403 members to over 22,000 utilizing a significant portion of all the professional nurses in the United States. Their willingness to volunteer was the blueprint for how nurses would answer the need across the 20th century when the patriots responded to a call to arms in support of our Nation and freedom around the world.

The contributions and accomplishments of World War I nurses advanced care of the wounded and ill across the world. They demonstrated the capabilities and importance of nurses on the front lines where their skills, dedication and compassion reduced morbidity and mortality of the battlefield. These achievements led to debate and progression on important issues to women and nurses for appropriate rank, compensation and retirement benefits. Through all of these challenges, Army Nurses focused on the needs of their patients and the mission clearly demonstrating that nurses were integral members of the healthcare team—long before the concept was accepted that care requires a team effort!

I ask that you ponder the strength and compassion of World War I Army nurses as you reflect on their stories, photos and experiences in this commemorative edition. They did not enjoy the technology that we now take for granted. However, their dedication to duty, commitment to all who needed their care, professionalism and patriotism set an incredible foundation for all of us who have followed their lead. I am grateful to these outstanding leaders and I know as you learn more about them, you will share my gratitude and amazement at all they contributed and achieved.

GALE S. POLLOCK
Major General, United States Army
Deputy Surgeon General for Force Management
Chief, Army Nurse Corps

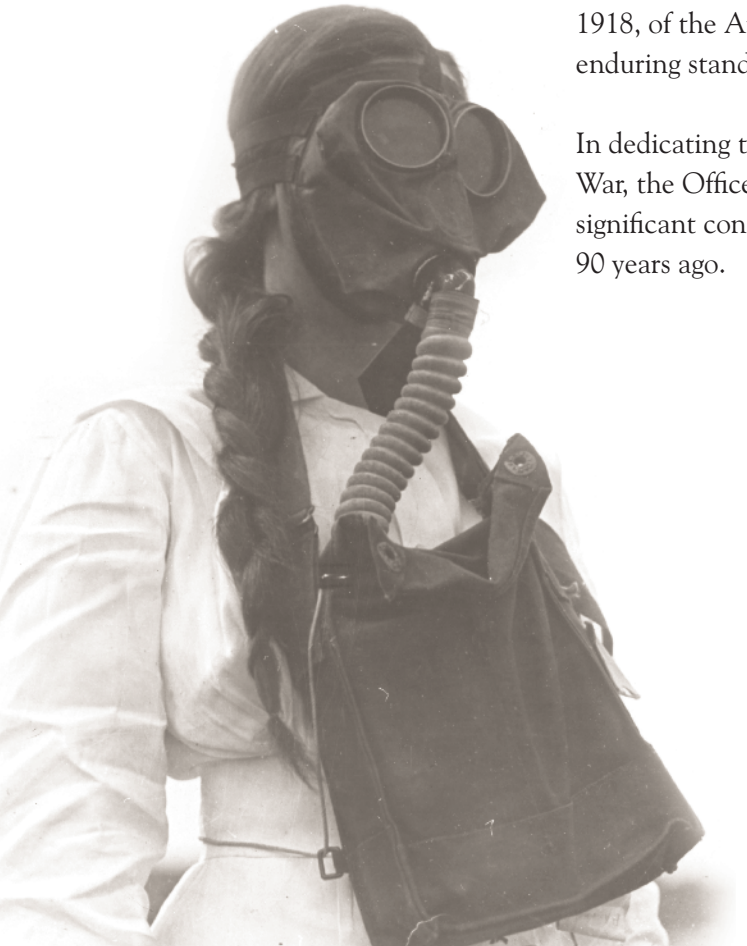
(Opposite) *General John J. Pershing, Commander AEF, with Army nurses.*

Tribute

The year 2008 marks the 90th anniversary of the signing of the armistice that ended World War I on November 11, 1918. The extreme conditions of this bloody global conflict posed an unprecedented challenge to the U.S. Army's medical service, which grew increasingly reliant upon the support of its nursing volunteers. Women of the Army Nurse Corps (ANC) endured the hardships of battle while carving themselves a niche that included service in camp and field hospitals, evacuation hospitals, mobile hospitals, hospital trains, and base hospitals.

By mid-1918, the strength of the ANC had grown to more than 12,000 from just over 1,000 the year before. Recognition of the valuable role nurses played during the war led to the establishment, also in 1918, of the Army School of Nursing, a highly respected and unique institution that set exacting and enduring standards of quality.

In dedicating this commemorative publication to all Army nurses who served during the First World War, the Office of The Surgeon General and the U.S. Army Medical Command pay tribute to the significant contributions that the Army Nurse Corps made to the advancement of military medicine 90 years ago.



(Opposite) *Changing dressings at Base Hospital No. 52, Rimaucourt, Haute Marne, France.*

Sergeant First Class Clarence Jackson and Private First Class John Dadette, Signal Corps Photographers, 33rd Division, Luxembourg.

Editor's Note

GATHERED HERE FOR THE FIRST TIME is a rare and carefully chosen collection that depicts the rich and varied experiences of Army nurses during the First World War as recorded by U.S. Army Signal Corps photographers. Thanks to their diligent efforts, we have inherited a priceless legacy of the war as seen through their lens.

Although these images appear in various tones of black and white, they are embedded with the ever-changing hues of human drama, emotion, tragedy, and exhilaration that typically color the personal wartime experience.

To accompany this photographic anthology, I have selected numerous excerpts from contemporary historians whose well-researched accounts of the ANC in 1918 offer invaluable understanding of the role these brave volunteers played. Included among these are Lettie Gavin's *American Women in World War I* (1997); *A History of the U.S. Army Nurse Corps* by Mary T. Sarnecky (1999); and *Heritage of Leadership, Army Nurse Corps Biographies* by Dorothy B. Pocklington (2004).

The earlier writings of Julia Stimson, the indefatigable Superintendent of the Army Nurse Corps in 1918, are also represented here as they appeared in her printed wartime letters *Finding Themselves* (1918) and "The Army Nurse Corps" section of *The Medical Department of the United States Army in the World War* (1927). *The Annual Report of The Surgeon General, 1919*, also provided a wealth of practical data, but my deepest gratitude is reserved for those women who left behind a trove of first-hand accounts in their personal diaries and letters home. These often amusing, occasionally distressing, and frequently heartrending voices vividly animate the extraordinary tale depicted on the following pages.

LISA M. BUDREAU, DPhil, MA, Editor
Office of Medical History
Office of The Surgeon General
Falls Church, Virginia

Preface

The evolutionary history of the Army Nurse Corps is perhaps the most unusual of all the Army officer corps. The Corps was not established with military rank and structure, but began in 1901 with barely more than 100 female nurses who lacked appropriate titles, military status, or even uniforms. Each progressive step in the organization's history thereafter required a series of victories, each built upon previous successes.

World War I nurses were highly instrumental in this developmental process, despite the frequent hardships and danger many faced. They were the first to prove that nurses held a rightful place at the front lines, where they could make a valuable, often life-saving difference. In so doing, these were the first women to receive recognition for gallantry on the battlefield. Because of their performance, after World War I a rudimentary rank structure and retirement allocation for all members of the Army Nurse Corps were enacted.

In these pages you will see the faces of the very people responsible for the Corps' earliest achievements as depicted in photographs, often accompanied by their own words. Quite simply, they changed our history. Ninety years later, Army nurses have risen to new heights. Now, they have the opportunity to be board-selected for command positions and have even risen to conquer such monumental challenges as serving as the acting Surgeon General of the United States Army.

Fortunately, the history of the Army Nurse Corps also attracts the interest of scholars external to the organization. I would like to thank Gray & Associates Consultants for supporting this project and Dr. Lisa Budreau for her interest, immense skill, and determination in seeing that this wonderful story is told.

Lt. Col. Richard M. Prior, USA
Army Nurse Corps Historian, 2006–2008

ROSE
U.S.ARM

Some of America's best uniformed World War I artists, such as Captain Harvey Dunn, Captain Wallace Morgan, and Captain George Matthews Harding, illustrated the combat scenes featured herein. Harding was one of the few artists who used a camera in addition to sketches and notes to record his impressions in the field. The U.S. Army Signal Corps later photographed his work, now part of the National Archives' still photograph collection.

Introduction

The First World War, a global military conflict that took place primarily in Europe from August 4, 1914, to November 11, 1918, resulted chiefly from the breakdown of old alliances among European powers. The Entente was comprised of France, Russia (until 1917), Great Britain, and later Italy (from 1915). The United States entered the conflict when it declared war on Germany on April 6, 1917, as an "associate" to the Allied nations. Together, they defeated the Central Powers of the Austro-Hungarian, German, and Ottoman empires.

The conflagration, characterized by trench warfare, machine guns, barbed wire, shell holes, widespread chemical warfare, and masses of artillery, was responsible for the death of approximately 9 million people worldwide. Often called the "Great War," these years of bloody conflict had a devastating impact on the history of the 20th century. Millions of individuals suffered fatal or often disabling wounds and injuries, and each belligerent nation bore immeasurable and long-term social, financial, and psychological costs.