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Beehive Archive

Welcome to the Beehive Archive—your weekly bite-sized look at some of the most pivotal—and peculiar—events in Utah history. With all of the history and none of the dust, the Beehive Archive is a fun way to catch up on Utah’s past. Beehive Archive is a production of the Utah Humanities Council, provided to local papers as a weekly feature article focusing on Utah history topics drawn from our award-winning radio series, which can be heard each week on [KCPW](#) and [Utah Public Radio](#).

Utah Nurses in World War I

Three of the many nurses who traveled from Utah to Europe to serve in World War I.

As World War I intensified in Europe, so did the need for medical help. The Red Cross established base hospitals and field units throughout Europe, and launched a major recruitment campaign for medical staff. As the United States entered the fray in 1917, the War Department aimed to enlist 25,000 nurses. There were 450 trained nurses in Utah that year and 80 of them volunteered to leave for Europe to serve the war effort.

One of these women was Myrtle Butler of Centerville, Utah. She graduated from the LDS Hospital School of Nursing in 1917, and was working in Wyoming. When the Red Cross called for nurses, Myrtle signed up and was eventually assigned to a hospital in France. In December of 1918 she wrote, “Oh what a joy it is to be of some service to those noble boys of Uncle Sam’s.”

Maud Fitch of Eureka, Utah was an ambulance driver in France. In her letters home, Maud describes driving through completely dark roads packed with advancing troops, coming upon towns that were destroyed by bomb shells, and bribing traffic directors with cigarettes in order to get her ambulance through.

Mabel Bettilyon was assigned to Evacuation Hospital No. 1 and recounts that “in one night alone, more than 800 wounded American soldiers were brought” in. Due to the shortage of nurses, she was given the responsibility to care for 136 of them. Many of the other nurses prized souvenirs from the German patients, but Mabel wrote that, “...seeing our men wounded and dying is all I want [to remember]... I feel now as tho I wouldn't give the smallest place in my trunk for anything off a prisoner.”

Myrtle, Maud, and Mabel journeyed to Europe to fulfill their duty as nurses and brought home unique experiences that advanced the nursing profession. Moreover, their service demonstrates the importance of women’s contributions during World War I.

Beehive Archive is a production of the Utah Humanities Council. Sources consulted in the creation of the Beehive Archive and past episodes may be found at www.utahhumanities.org/BeehiveArchive.htm. © Utah Humanities Council 2014.

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