

The Indiana Sanitary Commission: Neglected from Hoosier History

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In the history of the Hoosier state during the Civil War, the Indiana Sanitary Commission receives only a passing mention in prominent historical texts. This is a disservice to the impact that the ISC had on the lives of soldiers and their families throughout the Civil War. The ISC provided a necessary and lifesaving service through financial support, sending nurses to assist soldiers on the front and collecting supplies through localized donations from soldiers' aid societies. Through the efforts of the ISC working without the assistance of other Commissions, such as the United States Sanitary Commission, the Western Sanitary Commission, and the Christian Commission, the ISC provided for its people on the front and at home. This organization received enough donations to support Indiana troops, both active duty and veterans, and their families during the Civil War and still have enough left over to assist others who asked for assistance but who were not from Indiana. During this time other states within the Union might have provided similar assistance so as to best provide for their people fighting for the Union cause but Indiana was unique in choosing to act alone. Indiana saw that there was a specialized need and pooled together its resources to provide care for its people.

There is no leading historian of the ISC, but those that mention it include historians such as Robert Taylor Jr. Published in his history of the state at the grand opening of the Indiana Historical Society, Taylor's article mentions the significance of the ISC in the nearly 200 years of Indiana history.¹ Historian Peggy Brase Seigel also references the ISC and its importance for women's experience during the war and how they participated in the ISC, namely as nurses.² Though these two historians add something to the composition of the history of Indiana during the Civil War by writing about the ISC, there is still a void. Taylor and Seigel failed to address

¹ Robert M. Taylor Jr., *The State of Indiana History 2000: Papers Presented at the Indiana Historical Society's Grand Opening* (Indiana: Indiana Historical Society, 2001), 14-15.

² Peggy Brase Seigel, "She Went to War: Indiana Women Nurses in the Civil War," *Indiana Magazine of History* 86, no. 1 (1990), 2.

why this Commission was necessary and how it fit into a larger picture within the other Sanitary Commissions of the Union. The historian that most closely covers the ISC is Emma Lou Thornbrough. In several pages of her history of Indiana during the Civil War, she discusses some of the intricacies of the Commission and how no other states who attempted to run their own Commissions would do it to the extent of Indiana.³ My paper fills that gap in the literature on Civil War Indiana. To supplement the secondary and primary sources, I will be using the work of other historians such as Judith Ann Giesberg, to provide context. Giesberg has written extensively on the USSC and focuses on the women's role in aid work which allowed for the USSC to be successful.⁴ I will similarly discuss women's role throughout the ISC, referencing the work of women on a broader scale to fill in the missing information that is not available through primary sources.

Primary sources are key in showing how the Indiana Sanitary Commission was able to assist their soldiers during the Civil War, providing the supplies needed specifically for Hoosiers on the battlefield. Correspondents and diaries look at the personal interaction between people. This tells us more of the intimate feelings and perspectives that people held during the time and how they shared the news of the ISC. Official documentation from the ISC during the war can also produce a closer look at the concrete evidence of support that was given by the people to the soldiers of the Hoosier state. There is also the importance of looking at more day-to-day sources such as newspapers for our sense of public feeling on the ISC, as newspapers have a way of telling the public who read them how to feel on a subject. These different sources of newspapers, letters and official records produce a new perspective on the topic, filling in more than just the

³ Emma Lou Thornbrough, *Indiana in the Civil War 1850-1880* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1965), 170.

⁴ Judith Ann Giesberg, *Civil War Sisterhood : The U.S. Sanitary Commission and Women's Politics in Transition* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 2000), 11.

basic context that is given in the secondary sources. These documents will tell us how Hoosiers felt and how their experiences are not singular but shared by other members of the Midwest during this time of crisis.

The ISC formed, as stated by the official papers of the Indiana Sanitary Commission written by the president William Hannaman and treasurer Alfred Harrison in 1865, after the Battle of Fort Donelson.⁵ Indiana regiments such as the 31st and 44th fought in the battle and experienced different forms of hardships, such as weather that drenched the soldiers and made it impossible for them to cook food.⁶ These soldiers were hit numerous times by the Confederate soldiers but persevered as the Confederate forces eventually retreated.⁷ This was the major instance though when Indiana troops received casualties, which prompted greater concern for their wellbeing.⁸ Newspapers such as *The Plymouth Democrat*, show some light on why this instance may have been one to cause concern for the people. As there was an intention to hold a “glorification meeting” for the battle that had taken place at Fort Donelson, some saw this as poor timing “while our bleeding, dying and dead soldiery lie exposed on the battle-field.”⁹ It is from sources such as this one that we can see from the Democratic perspective that the focus was solely on the condition of the soldiers, which may have been part of the push for the creation of the ISC. Though it is unknown from the sources of official documentation why the creation of the ISC was deemed necessary it could be theorized that the reason for the formation and concern for the troops was due to the large number of Indiana soldiers participating in this fight and had injuries inflicted upon them. It could also be due to the fact that this was one of the closest battles

⁵ William Hannaman and Alfred Harrison, *Report of the Indiana Sanitary Commission Made to the Governor* (Indianapolis: W. R. Holloway, State Printer, 1865), 3.

⁶ James A. Treichel, “Lew Wallace at Fort Donelson,” *Indiana Magazine of History*, 59 (March 1963), 8.

⁷ Treichel, “Lew Wallace at Fort Donelson,” 14.

⁸ Thornbrough, *Indiana in the Civil War*, 170.

⁹ (Plymouth) “The Glorification Meeting,” *The Plymouth Democrat*, February 27, 1862.

to the state, causing the people of Indiana to take greater notice of the war and how their troops were being treated so close to their home. This battle that occurred in February of 1862, went on to spur the creation of the Indiana Sanitary Commission in the following month.¹⁰ With the creation of the ISC, Governor Oliver P. Morton then placed the running of the organization into the hands of local Indiana businessman William Hannaman, who monitored the success of the Commission and its auxiliaries with the assistance of agents of the Commission.¹¹ Hannaman would be put in charge of collecting all the supplies given to the Commission, making sure that the items were given to the Indiana soldiers in the most need.¹² More instance of the good that was committed by Hannaman was written in the *Buffalo Morning Express* would be responsible for selling materials so that the Soldier's aid societies of the state could benefit from the funds.¹³ The interaction taking place shows a give and take between the ISC and Soldiers' Aid Societies that proving a more fruitful relationship than the USSC, as the USSC had the desire to manage most aspects of their Commission, which will become more apparent in later discussions.

On April 24, 1862, Calvin Fletcher, who was close to the ISC and its members, as well as Governor Morton, took part in a discussion that the Commission would pay for half of the cost of a steamboat that would bring the sick and wounded soldiers of Indiana back to the state to receive treatment. The boat would also carry supplies for those in need on the front.¹⁴ These types of movements were especially seen after the Battle of Shiloh when these forms of boats carried hundreds of nurses and doctors "back and forth between Indiana and Pittsburg Landing," doing this to bring wounded soldiers to safety in Indiana.¹⁵ From the official record of the ISC, it

¹⁰ Seigel, "She Went to War," 2.

¹¹ Seigel, "She Went to War," 17.

¹² (Plymouth) "To the People of Indiana," *The Weekly Republican*, February 19, 1863.

¹³ (Buffalo) "Good Thing," *Buffalo Morning Express*, October 9, 1862.

¹⁴ Gayle Thornbrough et al., *The Diary of Calvin Fletcher Volume VII 1861-1862* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1980), 408.

¹⁵ Thornbrough, *Indiana in the Civil War*, 171.

is known that by the end of the war there were five official hospital ships that would bring aid to the troops of Indiana.¹⁶ Fletcher testified that this was a practice that was put into effect in a short amount of time and had mixed results, Cyrus C. Hines, Fletcher's son-in-law, reported from the front describes how the efforts were coming along. Hines felt that the nurses being sent on the boat were doing a great service to the cause and that some of the material supplies were making it to where they were necessary. But this was not always the case, as Hines goes on to suggest that the nurses and doctors were using some of the supplies for themselves that were intended for the soldiers. Even more concerning for this situation Hines informed Fletcher of thievery at the docking area, as the goods that were "fruits, jellies, and wines of home manufacture," were being stolen and sold back to the soldiers at exorbitant prices. In an unfortunate loss of donations meant to aid the soldiers, Hines suggested that the steamboat exchange be put to a halt until a solution could be reached for this situation which undermined what the ISC was trying to accomplish.¹⁷

Governor Morton pushed to create the ISC. He was concerned after the events of Fort Donelson, about properly attending to the health needs of the Indiana soldiers. Primary sources leave unclear why Morton felt that the soldiers of the Hoosier state could not place their full trust in the United States Sanitary Commission for meeting their medical necessities, and that they should depend entirely on the Indiana-run organization for their care.¹⁸ But secondary sources from those like historian James Fuller, tell us a narrative of Governor Morton as "The Soldiers' Friend," going above and beyond to supply the troops of Indiana and gain their support.¹⁹ Governor Morton was known for his zeal in supplying the soldiers of Indiana; he was willing to

¹⁶ Hannaman, *Report of the Indiana Sanitary Commission*, 14.

¹⁷ Thronbrough et al., *The Diary of Calvin Fletcher*, 432.

¹⁸ Seigel, "She Went to War," 16-17.

¹⁹ A. James Fuller, *Oliver P. Morton and the Politics of the Civil War and Reconstruction*, (Kent, Ohio, 2017), 137.

go over the heads of military colleagues to get clothing and food where needed. In a dispute with General Henry Halleck over giving clothing to Indiana soldiers, Morton went over Halleck's head to the Secretary of War to accomplish his goal of getting extra clothing to the Hoosiers soldiers at camp.²⁰ This portrays the wartime governor's determination. There was further tension between the ISC and the USSC as they were both caring for the welfare of soldiers. There was growing animosity between the ISC and the USSC during the Civil War. Though there is no clear and specific reason given in primary sources, it could be deduced that this was due to the overstepping of each organization. This intrusion into each other's area can be seen in the fighting for the funds and supplies from the people of the Union, and specifically from local aid societies. A clear example of such tension between Governor Morton and the USSC, can be seen in a telegram Governor Morton sent requesting the USSC cease interfering with the shipment of ISC goods as both groups are working towards a common goal.²¹

Instances like this do show a territorial approach that prevented cooperation between the two Commissions, as they were attempting to accomplish the same goals as one another, but there was a focus within the ISC to only care for the soldiers of its state. This kind of parochialism was very common during the Civil War (in the South as well as the North). These instances of overlap and pushing into each other's territory for gathering and distributing aid, mirrored the states' rights sentiments that were occurring between the North and South. The USSC felt that the ISC was pushing for a similar kind of state sovereignty that the South had been arguing for before the beginning of the Civil War. But Indiana continued to refuse to merge with the greater national organization as there was a feeling of nothing to be gained by such a

²⁰ Thornbrough, *Indiana in the Civil War*, 174-75.

²¹ Morton telegram book no. 12: from July 11th 1863 to December 24th 1863, Civil War: Governor Morton Telegraph Books, (IUPUI University Library, Indianapolis).

merger while there would be a loss of “home interests” and “state pride.”²² A Jasper County man wrote that locals “with most intense and absorbing interest” the careers of the people that are from their county as they refer to Brigadier General Milroy’s work in the military as “gallant and glorious.”²³ This same local pride applied to providing for the soldiers through the ISC.

Indiana was not the only state that created a Commission due to the desire to support their own soldiers. The Western Sanitary Commission, in September 1861, was formed due in part to some of the same reasons as the Indiana Sanitary Commission but on a broader scale. The WSC wanted to “alleviate suffering by troops and refugees in the Mississippi Valley and the Trans-Mississippi Theater.”²⁴ Much like the Indiana Sanitary Commission, the WSC did not take aid from the USSC and did its own fundraising and encouragement of the people of its territory to aid the war effort either financially or through the gathering of supplies. What the WSC did have that the ISC did not was the support of the Secretary of War and the President. Like all other Commissions the WSC answered to the medical department, but similar to the ISC they were not under the supervision of the USSC, only the medical department.²⁵ The ISC modeled itself on the WSC as both organizations had their own independence from the USSC. These two Commissions also focused on the recruitment of women as nurses and not sending them through the same vetting process as would have occurred in the USSC.²⁶ The USSC was more selective in the women they recruited and sent to the military hospitals.²⁷ The women sent by the USSC had to go through a more stringent process of application and personal acceptance that was

²² Thornbrough, *Indiana in the Civil War*, 175.

²³ To Milroy From D. F. Davies, 7 September 1862, (Indiana State Library, Indianapolis).

²⁴ William Parrish, “The Western Sanitary Commission,” *Civil War History* 36, no. 1 (1990), 17, 19.

²⁵ Parrish, “The Western Sanitary Commission,” 22.

²⁶ Parrish, “The Western Sanitary Commission,” 20.; Seigel, “She Went to War,” 2.

²⁷ Giesberg, *Civil War Sisterhood*, 45.

headed by the famous Civil War nurse, Dorothea Dix.²⁸ There had been a trend during this era of a romanticization of war work that made younger women more inclined to volunteer their services, but Dix had an age limit set for only accepting women over thirty who had to be plain in appearance, whereas Indiana is not known for holding such standards for their female nurses.²⁹

Though the ISC had the intention of being the sole provider for aid in the state, it was not the only aid group providing for Hoosier soldiers. Before the creation of the ISC, Governor Morton had issued orders in the state for the creation of Ladies' Aid Societies that had the goal of providing relief materials for the soldiers of Indiana, which would include items such as "bandages, clothing, [and] food items." This occurred in October of 1861, months before the Battle of Fort Donelson that set the ISC in motion.³⁰ This was the trend around the Union during the Civil War, aid groups formed within a state in the hopes of helping their own soldiers. An example of this can be seen in a letter to Brigadier General Milroy, who was a native of Jasper County, Indiana. In the letter, D. F. Davies, of the Soldiers' Aid Society of Jasper County, described the society's purpose as to "afford relief to the wounded and sick soldiers as far as lies in their power, and to see that all the families of volunteers are amply provided for."³¹

Within the ISC that were organizations that called themselves their own Sanitary Commissions, such as the one in Evansville. But this did not mean they are as factionalized as the ISC was with the USSC. The Evansville Sanitary Commission, similar to the various other Commissions, collected supplies to send to soldiers and would do this by collecting the materials from various aid societies around the state.³² This was part of a larger trend where goods were

²⁸ Robert M. Taylor Jr., *The State of Indiana History 2000*, 14-15.

²⁹ Nina Silber, *Daughter of the Union: Northern Women Fight the Civil War*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 2005), 114.

³⁰ Thomas E. Rodgers, "Hoosier Women and the Civil War Home Front," *Indiana Magazine of History* 97, no. 2 (2001), 115-116.

³¹ To Milroy from D. F. Davies, 7 September 1862, (Indiana State Library, Indianapolis).

³² (Evansville) "Evansville Sanitary Commission," *The Evansville Daily Journal*, June 11, 1862.

collected locally, given to the county and then forwarded to Indianapolis where all the goods would be stored for further use.³³

Although the aid societies were organized at the county level, they relied on individuals to collect funds and supplies. The women of Indiana and more broadly the United States, were key to allowing for the various Commission to thrive. The nineteenth-century separate spheres ideology held that a woman's life was meant to be lived inside the home. She was not to be involved in public matters that were meant for her husband. But as women were being asked by all the various Commissions to partake in fundraising, it can be noted that there is a push for them to move into a more public role. They did this without specifically challenging the idea of separate spheres as they took on the roles of caregiver still to give aid to the soldiers of the Union.³⁴ From research we are able to distinguish the type of white women that would have been most active in the various Commissions. These Union women were mostly of the middle class and upper class, having the time and resources to contribute to the war effort.³⁵ The elite women of Indiana were put into a role where they were able to take part in a more public area of society by participating in reform organizations, such as Ladies' Aid Societies and the ISC.³⁶ These women who participated were said to make wonderful supplies and were portrayed as an "army of knitters."³⁷ Elite women received the most attention for participating in these types of organizations, but in a way, they were getting women of the working class involved in the production of supplies as well. The women of the upper classes would employ these women who would then produce materials that would be used for the war effort. Northern women would

³³ Thornbrough, *Indiana in the Civil War*, 170.

³⁴ Giesberg, *Civil War Sisterhood*, 24.

³⁵ Silber, *Daughters of the Union*, 166.

³⁶ Rodgers, "Hoosier Women and the Civil War Home Front," 109.

³⁷ Thavolia Glymph, *The Women's Fight: The Civil War's Battles for Home, Freedom, and Nation* (North Carolina, The University of North Carolina Press, 2020), 134.

“turn the domestic production of war materials over to servants, just as slaveholders did to enslaved women.”³⁸ But even working-class women who were hit the hardest during the Civil War, either by inflation or the lack of their husband’s income, they were still motivated to assist in any way they could. These women would be working directly for the cause even when they could not give the supplies or monetary funds that the organization’s desired.³⁹

Sanitary work could be seen as women stepping out of their sphere, but it was acceptable because it was deemed to be patriotic.⁴⁰ Historian Nina Silber argues that the reason for this feeling of patriotism is brought on by the work that was being taken part in. Instilled in these women was a sense of “preserving the nation and directly called on them to serve the government.”⁴¹ As women volunteered and associated with strangers so as to be able to gather the supplies needed to meet quotas for the different auxiliaries that they may have been a part of. For the women of Indiana, they were seen as vital as previously stated, Governor Morton specifically asked to form their own aid societies before the birth of the ISC.⁴² The majority of the leadership of the different aid societies that were organized in the counties of Indiana, were women. When Indianapolis businessman Calvin Fletcher went to a meeting that would be headed by Governor Morton, he saw that there were “some 150 ladies representing almost that number of branch sanitary societies in the state.”⁴³ This shows the importance of women taking on new roles in the societies as in this situation they greatly outnumbered the men in the meeting.

Historian Judith Giesberg illustrates how women stepped into the semipublic realm through the USSC and the work of the Woman’s Central Association of Relief (WCAR). This

³⁸ Glymph, *The Women’s Fight*, 136.

³⁹ Giesberg, *Civil War Sisterhood*, 76.

⁴⁰ Giesberg, *Civil War Sisterhood*, 31.

⁴¹ Silber, *Daughters of the Union*, 164

⁴² Seigel, “She Went to War,” 16-17.

⁴³ Gayle Thronbrough et al., *The Diary of Calvin Fletcher Volume VIII 1861-1862* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1980), 343.

group formed and prospered with the aid of the men that would go on to create the USSC. The intention of the WCAR was to encourage the growth of charities and work directly with the Union's medical department to take of the sanitary needs of its soldiers.⁴⁴ Though the WCAR did not become the sole institution of taking care of the needs of soldiers, it became the most powerful auxiliary based out of the USSC.⁴⁵ These women and auxiliary institutions were the backbone of every Commission making taking on the hands-on responsibilities and decision making, while men held the leadership positions that governed the USSC and other various Commissions.⁴⁶

These women were the people that were on the ground getting the contributions necessary to care for soldiers on every front. Mary Shelton of Iowa volunteered to go to Nashville, Tennessee on July 12th, 1864, to take care of some of the soldiers in the vicinity. The ISC used Nashville as one of the centers for the military agencies that took contributions and dispersed them to the Indiana troops.⁴⁷ Though Shelton does not state it outright, she was probably taking part in the United States Christian Commission. She says "the USCC is more and more a blessing to the sufferers," in reference to her work in a military hospital.⁴⁸ This was a woman who volunteered to take care of the soldiers of the Union without experience, showing that it was a common occurrence for women to volunteer. And it could be assumed that this was a woman of a more prosperous status and without family obligations, as she was able to leave home for an extended period of time without the worry of financial difficulties for her family or the need to care for children. Women volunteering as nurses became a common occurrence in

⁴⁴ Giesberg, *Civil War Sisterhood*, 33.

⁴⁵ Giesberg, *Civil War Sisterhood*, 42.

⁴⁶ Silber, *Daughters of the Union*, 165.

⁴⁷ Thornbrough, *Indiana in the Civil War*, 171.

⁴⁸ "Diary of Mary Shelton: April to July 1864," Iowa Digital Library, https://digital.lib.uiowa.edu/islandora/object/ui%3Atestcwid_3538.

Indiana as Governor Morton sent the volunteer nurses who applied for the ISC where they were needed, either to military hospitals, camps, or hospital boats to administer aid.⁴⁹

The nurses that participated in the ISC did not always have the training one would expect, but that did not stop them from volunteering in their various capacities to aid those that were injured in the Indiana regiments. It was during 1863 that the majority of these nurses were being recruited. An example of this can be seen in the diary of Calvin Fletcher whose own daughter-in-law was one of the volunteers that went with a group of twenty-five women to Nashville, in the hopes of assisting Indiana soldiers as nurses in January 1863.⁵⁰ More than just the women that were asked to volunteer, others asked Governor Morton specifically for advice on how to best use their skills. In response, he would send them off to apply directly to wherever it was they desired to assist people. Governor Morton was one of the most aggressive of the war time governors during the Civil War, as he would push for any of the women that volunteered to be sent straight to the hospital centers or ships so that their skills, however underdeveloped, could be used to the benefit of the soldiers.⁵¹

From the time when volunteering for nurses was picking up in 1863 until the end of the war in 1865, the number of Hoosier women that contributed to the war effort as nurses was approximately 250.⁵² To the detriment of historical records, there were none that were kept specifically on the experiences of female nurses from the ISC during the Civil War. Though these women were praised for their sacrifices at home as they went to potentially dangerous environments, their experiences are neglected from the typical narrative of the ISC and women's experiences during the Civil War.

⁴⁹ Seigel, "She Went to War," 2.

⁵⁰ Gayle Thronbrough et al., *The Diary of Calvin Fletcher Volume VIII*, 11.

⁵¹ Seigel, "She Went to War," 11, 16.

⁵² Seigel, "She Went to War," 9.

Although specific information about women in the ISC is lacking, the various Commission raised awareness and funds through sanitary fairs. Women and men used their skills in such ways to get the maximum amount of participation from the public. How these citizens took part, no matter the Commission, would appear as sanitary fairs. Within these fairs is another instance where women took the lead in organization, chiefly coordinated by women of the higher classes.⁵³ These fairs hosted thousands of people to come and celebrate their soldiers and gather financial support and supplies for the war effort. The WSC and other Commissions held sanitary fairs. The WSC's sanitary fairs received support from other states in the Midwest, including Indiana.⁵⁴ The USSC considered local auxiliaries holding of sanitary fairs as "unacceptable acts of local autonomy."⁵⁵ The same vein of separate sovereignty that the USSC had been concerned about previously. The USSC even disapproved of their own auxiliaries holding fairs without the authority of the national body.

Although some critics said, "soldiers' aid societies are emphatically played out," these organizations took part in a fundraising operation that brought them great success.⁵⁶ The sanitary fairs were most successful in 1863 and 1864, with the height of their profitability taking place in 1864.⁵⁷ The major Sanitary Commissions that took part in the sanitary fairs were the WSC, the USSC and the ISC. Some examples of these great sanitary fairs were seen in Chicago's Northwestern Fair, which was carried out with great pageantry according to the *Evansville Daily*

⁵³ Rodgers, "Hoosier Women and the Civil War Home Front," 109, 116.; Christine Engels, "The Great Western Sanitary Fair Papers," *Ohio Valley History* 14, no. 4 (2014), 66.

⁵⁴ Engels, "The Great Western Sanitary Fair Papers," 66.

⁵⁵ Giesberg, *Civil War Sisterhood*, 106.

⁵⁶ (Evansville) "Spirit of the Copperhead Democracy," *The Evansville Daily Journal*, July 16, 1864.

⁵⁷ Thornbrough, *Indiana in the Civil War*, 170.
Giesberg, *Civil War Sisterhood*, 139.

Journal.⁵⁸ In 1864, the ISC held a sanitary fair in Indianapolis. Indiana newspapers called out women to meet with Governor Morton personally to discuss the preparations for the sanitary fair in Indianapolis.⁵⁹ Indiana held its own sanitary fair but changed the name to the Sanitary Bazaar, taking place at the state fairgrounds during October 1864 at the height of this movement.⁶⁰ According to the official Indiana Sanitary Commission record, more than \$40,000 was raised during this time, as the sanitary exhibition took place over the State Fair week.⁶¹

Indiana was a crossroads where trains from all over the North transported soldiers to the front. Especially in Indianapolis, soldiers changed trains and waited for transportation to their assigned areas. Because of these layovers the ISC decided that it would be best to house those that were waiting temporarily, meeting whatever needs that they had. Before 1862, the ISC housed soldiers in hotels near the train station. After the autumn of that year Governor Morton saw that there was a greater need for housing these soldiers and created the Soldiers' Home which would help up to 150 men at a time.⁶² But this proved to be insufficient and new establishments were created to meet the high demands of the men. Housing was needed not just for soldiers in transit but for the sick and wounded that were returning from the front. The soldiers' housing needs continued to grow over the course of the war until the establishment grew from just one building to several on a permanent plot of land near the White River in Indianapolis.⁶³ The buildings that were added to the establishment included dining, sleeping

⁵⁸ (Evansville) "The Great Sanitary Fair in Chicago," *The Evansville Daily Journal*, November 2, 1863.

⁵⁹ (Indianapolis) "Attention Ladies," *The Indianapolis Star*, August 30, 1864.

⁶⁰ (Steuben County) "Sanitary Bazaar," *Steuben Republican*, May 13, 1864.

⁶¹ William Hannaman and Alfred Harrison, *Report of the Indiana Sanitary Commission*, 15; (Steuben County) "Sanitary Bazaar," *Steuben Republican*, May 13, 1864.

⁶² Hannaman, *Report of the Indiana Sanitary Commission*, 12

⁶³ William Henry Harrison Terrell, *Indiana in the War of the Rebellion: Report of the Adjutant General*, (Indiana, Indiana Historical Bureau, 1960), 455.

arrangements, and a hospital.⁶⁴ The construction of the building necessary to support the thousands of soldiers that found themselves to the Home every day was funded by the state. But much like in the way of Soldier's Aid Societies with the ISC, the people of the state also contributed directly to the Soldiers' Home, providing materials from food to books, when much of the home was being provided for directly from the Commissary Department.⁶⁵ But it was the ISC itself that designated funds to continue the maintenance of the Home and operated its daily duties to the soldiers it that were housed in Indianapolis.⁶⁶

The official ISC record reported that over 100,000 "soldiers have been fed" at the Soldiers' Home, showing the widespread care that the ISC took for not only Indiana soldiers but of all the soldiers that found their way to Indianapolis.⁶⁷ Despite this impressive number of soldiers served *The Indianapolis Star* stated that "the benefits of the Home [were] confined to too few of our private soldiers."⁶⁸ In 1864, the *Indianapolis Star* stated that the Soldiers' Home was doing great work that had assisted up to 167,900 soldiers up until that point.⁶⁹ Those critical of the Soldiers' Home held the desire to help only the local soldiers of Indiana, as it was seen as not caring enough for the Hoosier soldiers when aid was being given to all soldier from outside the state in this transitory environment.

Accommodations for the women that were coming to say goodbye to their loved ones were also needed. The women coming into the state may not have had any money with them to financially support themselves through this trip to see dear ones, but that did not stop them from arriving. Because of these women's needs during their stay in the state, Governor Morton saw

⁶⁴ Terrell, *Indiana in the War of the Rebellion*, 456.

⁶⁵ Terrell, *Indiana in the War of the Rebellion*, 456-457.

⁶⁶ Thornbrough, *Indiana in the Civil War*, 176.

⁶⁷ Hannaman, *Report of the Indiana Sanitary Commission*, 12.

⁶⁸ (Indianapolis) "The Soldiers' Home Project," *The Indianapolis Star*, August 7, 1865.

⁶⁹ (Indianapolis) "Indiana Sanitary Commission," *The Indianapolis Star*, March 3, 1864.

the need to house the women. Hospitality protected them from the people that would prey on the naïve and defenseless women coming into an unknown area. The women's need and vulnerability were increased because some had brought children with them. Before this system of the Ladies' Home was enacted the Commission would aid those who applied with money to pay for the hotel bills they acquired during their stay in the state, which was seen as a misuse of resources.⁷⁰ The Ladies' Home was created then by the ISC to help these women. It was officially established on December 1, 1863.⁷¹ These forms of homes and aid would continue on past the end of the ISC and Civil War, as the Indiana State Soldiers' Home was created in 1896, in Lafayette, Indiana. This home housed the honorably discharged soldiers of the military and specifically those that were from the Hoosier state.⁷²

It was shortly after the end of the Civil War that the ISC saw that its purpose had come to an end. Without ongoing fighting and with the troops from Indiana beginning to return home, the ISC ended its main mission in 1865. But this was not the final call for other Union aid societies, as there were still funds that could be distributed to those that were found in need. Throughout the war, the ISC and other Commissions had operated on the assumption that they were delivering aid to those who deserved it. Though at the end of the war it is unclear from official records what was done with the left over funds of the ISC, is some indication of what might have occurred with the fund left over from Soldiers' Aid Societies. What mattered to these aid workers was the character of those that asked for assistance and this attitude did not differ whether it was a man or a woman who was deciding the outcome of an application.⁷³ A system

⁷⁰ Terrell, *Indiana in the War of the Rebellion*, 459.

⁷¹ Hannaman, *Report of the Indiana Sanitary Commission*, 13.

⁷² The Indiana State Soldiers' Home in Lafayette, Indiana, 1896, General Picture Collection (Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis).

⁷³ Sarah E. Gardner, "When Service Is Not Enough: Charity's Purpose in the Immediate Aftermath of the Civil War," *The Journal of the Civil War Era* 9, no. 1 (2019), 37-38.

was established by those that were tasked with handing out aid, they were seen as part of the equation of determining how to create a new type of America. They saw that the best way to rebuild this Union was to only assist those with the best character and to do so these workers were the ones determining who was worthy.⁷⁴ Veterans returning from the Civil War that suffered from unseen disabilities, like depression, or those that they characterized with poor morals, such as those suffering from alcoholism, were not deemed worthy of the assistance that these aid societies could offer. That left thousands of soldiers without the assistance they needed. Historian Sarah E. Gardner states that “records remained silent on the particular reason for denying an application.”⁷⁵ Because of this we are unable to fully delve into who these workers were that denied aid and their full reasoning behind denials. But because of the mentality that the people during the 19th century who were making these judgments had been raised on, we can make the assumption it was based on the thought of who was deserving or not.

The full narrative of the Indiana Sanitary Commission’s works has been condensed and left out of the main narrative of the other various Commissions during the Civil War. This institution needs to be remembered for responding to the needs of Indiana soldiers during one of the darkest times in American history. The ISC mobilized all of the citizens of the state and allowed for women to step outside of their typically assigned roles to enter the public sphere to deliver aid. Though primary sources are lacking to give us a full picture of what the experiences were like of those that were part of the ISC and other aid groups, by looking at the works of people outside of Indiana we are able to fill in the gaps of the similar experiences that would have been happening within the ISC. This provides a fuller narrative of the experiences and the impact the ISC had on not only the soldiers that were able to benefit from their actions, but the

⁷⁴ Gardner, “When Service Is Not Enough,” 43.

⁷⁵ Gardner, “When Service Is Not Enough,” 46.

people that were aiding others. Newspapers showed how the public opinion of the ISC and the call for women to participate was large and enthusiastic, and official records show how Hoosiers donated to the ISC and to the Indiana Sanitary Bazaar. The ISC assisted not only thousands of Hoosier soldiers, but troops from outside the state, never denying help to those in need. The ISC was a charitable group whose impact is left on Hoosier history and further study on the organization would show more reasons for Hoosiers to be proud of their work during the Civil War.

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