AMERICAN RED CROSS, INDIANAPOLIS CHAPTER & INDIANAPOLIS SERVICE MEN'S CENTERS INC., 1919–1965

Collection Information

Historical Sketch

Scope and Content Note

Series Contents

Processed by
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May 2016

Visuals revised by Dorothy A. Nicholson
November 2016

Manuscript and Visual Collections Department
William Henry Smith Memorial Library
Indiana Historical Society
450 West Ohio Street
Indianapolis, IN 46202-3269

www.indianahistory.org
<table>
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<th>COLLECTION INFORMATION</th>
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| **VOLUME OF COLLECTION:**  
*Manuscript Materials:* 2 manuscript boxes, 22 bound volumes, 1 oversize manuscript (OM) folder  
*Visual Materials:* 3 photograph albums, 4 photograph boxes, 2 cold storage color photograph folders  
*Artifacts:* 7 artifacts |
| **COLLECTION DATES:** 1919–1965 |
| **PROVENANCE:** Indianapolis Public Library, September 1990 |
| **RESTRICTIONS:** When viewing the photograph albums gloves are required, ask for them at the desk |
| **COPYRIGHT:** Permission to reproduce or publish material in this collection must be obtained from the Indiana Historical Society |
| **ALTERNATE FORMATS:** |
| **RELATED HOLDINGS:** American Red Cross, Indianapolis Area Chapter Records,  
1916–1978: M0551, F1090—1108 |
| **ACCESSION NUMBER:** 1990.0215 |
| **NOTES:** |
HISTORICAL SKETCH

The Indianapolis Chapter of the American Red Cross formed on July 19, 1916 with William Fortune as president, Rev. Francis H. Gavisk as vice-president, John H. Holliday as treasurer, and Guernsey Van Riper as secretary. For the past 100 years, this agency has focused on three main areas of assistance: disaster relief, health services, and military support. In terms of relief, chapter volunteers have responded to natural and manmade disasters throughout the state's history by providing food, clothing, medicines, nursing care, and transportation. Health services, meanwhile, have included supplying the public with first aid, home nursing, swimming classes, nutrition information, and civil defense education. Finally, the organization has provided various types of military support: sewing and knitting millions of surgical dressings, coordinating blood drives, providing communication between soldiers and their families, and caring for the wounded on the battlefield as well as at several central Indiana hospitals, like Billings and Wakeman. Such assistance has been offered by the agency during every major conflict since World War I.

The Indianapolis Chapter of the American Red Cross also provided assistance to the USO's Indianapolis Service Men's Centers Inc., an organization that provided a "home away from home" for uniformed individuals from WWII into the 1960s.¹ The city's first club opened on Wabash Street on May 22, 1941. Led by director Dorothy F. Buschmann, it included numerous amenities for service men to enjoy including a game room, library, writing room, pantry shelf, and weekly dances. Subsequent branches with similar amenities were opened and/or incorporated during next two years to keep up with GI demand: Union Station Canteen on December 22, 1941, Illinois Street Center on July 8, 1942, Senate Avenue Center (for black service men) on July 24, 1942, and The Robert Park Center in the spring of 1943.

Each location was staffed mostly by volunteers from the community. Probably the largest group was the "Cadettes," single women between 18 and 30 who were selected by the organization to spend time with service men at the clubs and during dances. Members of the Indianapolis Chapter of the American Red Cross also volunteered at the centers, specifically in First Aid Rooms and by preparing weekly "Sunday Nite Suppers." In the end, these efforts by the Red Cross and Service Men's Centers played an important role in helping GI morale both before and after combat.

Sources:

Materials in collection.


¹ Service Men Clubs in Indianapolis originally operated from 1941–1947. They were reactivated in 1950 after the start of the Korean War.
SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

This collection consists of two series.

Series One covers the Indianapolis Chapter of the American Red Cross and includes several scrapbooks of newspaper clippings from 1919 to 1951, eleven volumes of The Red Cross Courier, the official publication of the American National Red Cross, from 1930 to 1940, one color newspaper advertisement from 1932, and one artifact.

Series Two covers Indianapolis Service Men's Centers Inc. (SMC). This section contains reports, memos, correspondence, newspaper clippings, newsletters, greeting cards, photo albums, and six artifacts related to the organization and its services.

Because of their fragile condition some of the albums were disbound and the photographs stored in folders in photograph boxes. The order of the photographs from the albums has been maintained within the folders.
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Army Patch

Navy Patch (1 of 2)

Navy Patch (2 of 2)

Two Recordio-Grams

Recordio-Gram (1 of 2)

Recordio-Gram (2 of 2)