CHAPTER THREE
Part V: War Work at Home and Abroad

Miss Leonard’s influence may have been a factor in the decision of many of her present or former students to volunteer for military service or war work. By 1919, the Normal Herald listed nearly thirty female students that were somehow involved in war service, and they warned that the list was not at all complete. Female students and alumni contributed to the war effort in the military, but also in offices, hospitals, and Y.M. C.A. canteens.

Myrtle Gray and Mary Swan were ISNS students who volunteered to be a part of the Indiana Hospital Army Nurses Unit. In October 1917, they went to camp lee for military training. After training they were assigned to Walter Reed Medical Center, where they worked with the wounded.

Other students took up clerical work in the offices of Washington, D.C. Thelma Sharbaugh, who was working in the office of a Brigadier General, reported to the Normal Herald that she was taking a night course to improve her skills and frequently met other ISNS students involved in such work. They were working in offices such as that of War Risk Insurance, Surgeon General, State, War, and Navy Building, Ordinance, and Engineering.

The YWCA was the most popular association on campus, so it is not surprising many students and alumni joined the YMCA to support its war work. For example, Effie Shields graduated from ISNS in 1906 and by the time the war began was an accomplished teacher. She left a teaching position and volunteered as a YMCA canteen worker. After receiving training in New York, she sailed for Europe and served in Rennes, Ballon, Paris, and the Le Mans.
Shields embraced the new experiences and opportunities offered by the war. When she heard that a friend was going to be married and wrote “I think it is more exciting to go to France.”

A teacher by training, she easily adapted to her new occupation which was, she told friends in a letter, a “business of personality.” She spent her time in keeping the men’s spirits up, writing to their mothers, serving cocoa, helping them choose books from the library, mending their clothes and just talking with them, in many ways taking the place of their mothers, wives, and sisters still in America. Her training as a teacher came in handy when she assisted a soldier from Texas in improving his reading.

Other alumni also answered the call to service. According to Leonard, former student Sarah Christy, “sold her chickens, her brooders, her car, her store, and her household goods, and has invested her money in bonds and mortgages, and is off to Washington in service.”

The students and faculty who remained at the school actively supported the war effort by knitting and sewing for the Red Cross, buying war bonds, raising money and food to cope with wartime scarcity.

Marion Spencer wrote to her mother that in the fall of 1917 that the students were all knitting for the soldiers so she had better learn. (October 2, 1917.) Spencer did take up knitting and had charge of a club of girls who did war knitting for the troops. Later she reported that she led a group in Red Cross assistance work. The student volunteers made 425 compresses in an hour, and she made 60 herself. (January 27, 1918) The class of 1918 donated money to help build and equip libraries for the soldiers.

Faculty, students, and alumni bought liberty bonds (or stamps). Spencer was given a bonus for at the end of the year and school authorities asked her if she wanted the money or a liberty bond. She took the bond and bought others as well. The alumni class of 1913 put their treasury into stamps. Faculty and students gave patriotic talks, such as Miss Eliza Keller, a YWCA member, who appeared in chapel during the war, speaking on “Economy among Women during the War.”
Students marched in Red Cross Parades through town and the school contributed $1,000.00 to the YMCA Student Friendship War Fund.

Faculty and students teaching at the Model school also led the children in activities designed to support the war. Hope Stewart taught her classes to do knit so they could make things for the soldiers. Students saved tin and fruit pits which could be used for war production and donated pennies to mite boxes in the school rooms which had been made by the practice teachers in drawing class.

Many events at the school were held to raise money to help the Red Cross. At one Red Cross benefit fifty children performed prior to a dance and normal school students dressed as Red Cross Nurses and sold refreshments. Normal and model school students put on a variety of entertainments to raise money, from plays to ice cream festivals. Actor Jimmy Stewart, then a student in the model school, staged plays in his barn to raise money for the war. “War gardens” were planted and cared for by children. Practice teachers provided oversight and assistance.

**Scarcity**

Scarcity of grain and meat, sugar and coal also called upon the patriotism of normalites and altered life at the school during the war. When the U.S. Food Administration asked the nation to observe Meatless Mondays and Wheatless Wednesdays, normal diet, which was already suffering from a lack of skilled kitchen help, deteriorated. Marion Spencer complained of the “endless monotony of beans and potatoes. When the Federal Fuel Administration called for coalless days, students and faculty endured frigid conditions on campus. Students recalled in the 1919 *Instano* that: “Most of Winter Term with its cold but coalless days was a great trial for everyone.”
During the war years except for the S.A.T.C. men and students in the college preparatory course, ISNS campus had very few male students. According to Marion Spencer, by October of 1918, there was only one male left in the senior class. (October 2, 1918) In spite of the longstanding female students numerical dominance, male students had still managed to secure the highest student leadership roles. Now, with the men nearly all gone, women students had leadership positions in almost every campus organization and activity. For the first time a pair of women edited the yearbook and served as business managers. They also ran both literary societies, and made up almost all the members of these organizations.

Class officers for 1919 were all female: Marion Lamison, President, Maude Crawford, Vice President, Helen George, Secretary, and Dorothy Hill, Treasurer. Vashiti Burr, (who would become an attorney with a national reputation) was the president of the Huyghenian, the largest literary society.