

Greene County

MAGAZINE

Red Cross in Greene: Dyke Auxiliary, 1917-1919



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While the serene foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains in Greene County may have offered a shart contract to the ware-ravaged communities in Europe during World War I, our small community was nevertheless touched by the conflict. While many young men from Greene left for military service on distant shores, residents remaining in Greene found a means of making their own humanitarian contribution through the auspices of the American Red Cross.

The American Red Cross was chartered by the United States Congress in 1905, and was sanctioned "...as the only voluntary relief agency with official permission to work with the armed forces in wartime."¹ It was not until October 9, 1917, however, that the Greene County Chapter of the American Red Cross was formed at Stanardsville.

At the time of organization, Mrs. B. M. Bushong was named Chairman of the Greene Chapter, and Mrs. E. M. Gibson was appointed Treasurer.² Mrs. L. E. Moyers was the Secretary, but she was subsequently replaced by Mrs. T. M. Shelton.³ Auxiliaries of the Greene Chapter were then established in various communities within the County, including the Dyke Community Auxiliary.

On November 23, 1917, the students of the Blue Ridge Industrial School near Dyke organized an auxiliary to the Red Cross Chapter in Stanardsville.⁴ The decision was made to enroll everyone at B.R.I.S. as Red Cross Members, and officers of this group were as follows: Willie Branham, President; Mary Morris, Vice-President; Evalyn Morris, Secretary; and Adelaide Frazier, Treasurer.⁵ This Junior Auxiliary was later incorporated into the larger Dyke Community Auxiliary.

The Blue Ridge Industrial School became a focal point of Red Cross activities for the Dyke community. According to minutes

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recorded by Auxiliary Secretary Evalyn Morris, it was the Blue Ridge Industrial School which "...became a center for the patriotic activities of the community", and "...led the way in Red Cross work..."⁶ Many Red Cross meetings were held at B.R.I.S., and the school's personnel and students were dedicated, active members.

The Red Cross meetings at Dyke were generally opened with a prayer, which would sometimes be followed by patriotic songs. The formalities, however, would soon give way to the pertinent business at hand: the purchasing and distributing of materials such as cotton and wool. The volunteers would divide the materials to work individually on the sewing, crocheting and knitting. Items such as bandages, washcloths, socks, hospital shirts, fracture pillows and related supplies would be made from the available materials, and upon completion would be forwarded to the central Red Cross unit at Stanardsville.

A concomitant factor in the administration of any voluntary, charitable organization is the ability to successfully raise funds. For the Dyke Community Auxiliary, this was frequently accomplished by activities called "entertainments". Such activities included the sale of refreshments at school and church functions in the community, and by "pound parties"--so named because each member contributed one pound of some item to be sold to raise funds.

The conclusion of World War I in November, 1918 apparently inspired, rather than to have dissipated, the continued efforts of the Dyke Community Auxiliary. However, the attention now shifted from providing supplies for American soldiers to that of assisting the destitute refugees.

On November 30, 1918, the Dyke Auxiliary undertook one of its most ambitious projects--an attempt to adopt two French orphans.⁷ This effort sparked correspondence with the Potomac Chapter of the

Red Cross in Washington, D. C. inquiring about adoption procedures. As the French Government would understandably not permit a mass emigration of its young citizens, this attempt by the Dyke Community Auxiliary -- and many other Red Cross Auxiliaries across the United States -- proved futile. Accordingly, the Dyke Auxiliary decided to "sew for the refugees" and to donate clothing to the relief agencies.

During the final weeks of 1918, a fruitful membership drive added significantly to the membership rolls. On December 14, 1918 it was reported that seventeen new members had been enrolled, and twenty-two more members joined during the week of Christmas, 1918.⁸ The mending of socks for refugees and related work continued during the spring of 1919, and in the summer of 1919, a "Rally Day" was held at Stanardsville to which the Dyke Auxiliary contributed two floats.

As the work of the Dyke Community Auxiliary neared its completion in the fall of 1919, the group was able to reflect with satisfaction upon their accomplishments during the preceding two years. Auxiliary Secretary Evalyn Morris entered the following summary of their work on the minutes:

"Most of the material being purchased with money raised by the Auxiliary. The following articles were knitted

- 2 dozen wash cloths
- 2 dozen scarfs
- 15 sweaters
- 3 dozen bandages
- 3 dozen pairs of socks
- 124 pairs of socks were darned
- 2 dozen hospital shirts were made
- 144 children's undershirts sewed
- 20 fracture pillows
- 8 comforts kits were made and filled. The contents of each valued at \$3.00
- A box of second hand clothing was sent to the Armenian's. Value of it was about \$25 and a bag of about the same value was sent to Halifax
- 6 Christmas boxes were sent to the boys in France through the Auxiliary

"The total amount of money raised was \$288.25. \$98 of this being membership dues which was sent to the Local Chapter at Stanardsville.

"The money was used for various purposes. \$95 was sent direct to France for R.C. work over there. \$5 to the Belgian Relief fund and \$27 for community work. The rest of the money was used in purchasing wool and other material to be made into clothing."⁹

The final act of the Dyke Community Auxiliary was its expression of support for the erection of "...a monument in honor of the soldiers who fought in defense of their country", which initiative was undertaken by the Greene County Red Cross.¹⁰ The events leading to the unveiling of this monument on November 11, 1922 is a story unto itself.

If it requires stating expressly, perhaps two important points should be noted from studying the activities of the Dyke Community Auxiliary: (1) that the contribution of women who never saw the battlefields of Europe was nevertheless profound, and (2) a relatively small group of people, united behind a worthy cause, can make a profound difference to the betterment of so many people.

REFERENCES:

- (1) Copy of "Proceedings of the American Association of the Red Cross, Washington, D. C. meeting of May 21, 1881.
- (2) Letter from Mrs. Helen B. Schell, Eastern Field Office, American Red Cross, Alexandria, Virginia, September 4, 1980.
- (3) Ibid.
- (4) Turner, Bessie Thornton. Chronicle of Blue Ridge School. Post Publishing Corp., Rocky Mount, Va. 1956 page 13. The Blue Ridge Industrial School, Dyke, Va. referred to was later changed to The Blue Ridge School.

- (5) Original Minutes of meeting, Dyke Auxiliary of The Stanardsville Chapter of the American Red Cross.
- (6) Ibid.
- (7) Ibid.
- (8) Ibid.
- (9) Ibid.
- (10) Ibid.

Exp. mem. recs.

Willie Branham	Mrs. Lurain Morris	Anna Collier
Delaine Frazer	Mrs. J. H. "	Mrs. John Collier
Stella Lawson	Mrs. F. E. "	Mrs. Mamie Knight
Lillie Knight	Miss Richards	Mrs. Bent Elliott
Bessie Morris	Miss Katharine Lawrence	Mrs. Charlie "
Evaleyn "	Miss Margaret "	'Susie Shiflett
Mary "	Mrs. Jones	'Clyde Morris
Bessie Lusk	Miss Sumner	Mad E. Morris
Emmie Stator	Mrs. Sullivan	'Mr. Sylvester "
Frankie Morris	Mrs. Mayo	'Mr. Get Marshall
Julia Lawson	Miss Hill	'Mr. Ellis Branham
Lida Pickers	Miss Curren	Miss Elizabeth Hinegar
Frances Just	'Mr. Andrew Morris	'Mrs. Mary Douglass
Rosa Reed	'Mr. Willie Snow	'Mollie Shiflett
Virginia Gentry	Mr. J. H. Morris	Pearle Jurelle
Mr. Leslin Ham	Mrs. Eliza Snow	'Virginia Lawson
Mr. George Elliott	Mr. Mayo	'Mrs. Myrtle Morris
Mrs. James Pickers	Mr. Birkey	Mrs. Hattie Morris
Miss Clarke	Miss Irene Moore	Mrs. John Marshall