



## **American Red Cross Military Hospitals in Paris**

The American Red Cross established a number of hospitals in France during World War I. Some of these were civilian facilities, many for the care of wounded or sick children. The plight of the orphans in World War I is an untold story as far as the English language literature is concerned. The Red Cross also established a number of hospitals for the care of wounded American military personnel.

During 1917, both the French authorities and the American Expeditionary Forces (AEF) command agreed there would be no American military hospitals in the Paris area. The French planned to incorporate American units into their own forces, as did the British. Both planned to have wounded Americans receive care in hospitals under their management. General Pershing and the AEF had other ideas about the control of American forces and their support. Pershing stood his ground and hammered out an agreement that American forces would go into the fight in the northeastern part of France, in the Lorraine region. Given the distances involved, it would make no sense for wounded Americans to receive care in the Paris area. As a result, many American Base hospitals were built in Northeastern France. Base hospitals were huge hospital complexes, that at times included several hospitals in one large encampment. These were far enough from the front to be secure and safe, but closer than Paris.

The American Red Cross leadership appeared to be more prescient as to the need for American military hospitals in the Paris vicinity. The organization lobbied and worked behind the scenes to establish management of a number of facilities in and around Paris. At first, they took care of French soldiers. They used buildings that were not built to be hospitals, such as the Lycée Pasteur in Neuilly-sur-Seine, which was a newly completed high school located a few blocks from the American Hospital.

The German Spring Offensive in 1918 changed all the well-laid plans of the AEF. The American Army First Division was the first AEF unit to go on the offensive. They attacked in Cantigny, north of Paris. The French guaranteed that Americans wounded in that battle would receive medical care in French hospitals since there were no American Army hospitals in that part of France. While the care was undoubtedly good, the ability of American soldiers to

communicate with French physicians and staff (at a time when English was not a common language in the medical community) was dismal.

A few days after the First Division went on the offensive, a German breakthrough near Château-Thierry threatened Paris and the outcome of the war. The French threw everything they had to plug the hole Germany had blasted in the French lines—to no avail. They made a desperate plea to the AEF to send troops to the area. In return, they guaranteed the medical care of the Americans going into battle. While they may have meant well, the French has lost nearly all their military hospitals in that area—45,000 beds and the buildings, staff, and physicians associated with them.

The Americans who went into the line in late May and June of 1918s around the Château-Thierry area were without medical support. Fortunately, the American Red Cross was reasonably prepared, and quickly brought a number of hospitals on line in Paris and then expanded them. Toes were stepped on and a few bureaucrats were enraged, but hospitals came on line at a critical time.

The American Red Cross Military Hospitals in Paris included:

- ARCMH-1 Neuilly-sur-Seine
- ARCMH-2: 5 rue Puccini, Paris (Southeast of Paris proper in Vitry-sur-Seine)
- ARCMH-3 rue de Chevreuse, Paris
- ARCMH-5: Auteuil, Paris
- ARCMH-6: Bellevue, Paris
- ARCMH-7: Jouilly-Seine-et-Marne
- ARCMH-8: Malabry
- ARCMH-9: 32 Boulevard des Batignolles (skin diseases)