

Collection #  
M0551  
F1090–1108

## AMERICAN RED CROSS, INDIANAPOLIS AREA CHAPTER RECORDS, 1916–1978

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Processed by

Paul Brockman  
19 February 1990

Visuals added by  
Shirley Yegerlehner and Dorothy A. Nicholson  
August 2010

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

[www.indianahistory.org](http://www.indianahistory.org)

## COLLECTION INFORMATION

VOLUME OF COLLECTION: **Manuscript Materials:** 1 document case, 19 reels of microfilm  
**Visual Materials:** 1 box of photographs, 1 OVA box of photographs, 1 OVB photograph, 1 photo album

COLLECTION DATES: 1916–1978

PROVENANCE: Indianapolis area chapter of the American National Red Cross, 441 E. 10<sup>th</sup> Street, Indianapolis, Ind. 46204, 11 September 1980

RESTRICTIONS: None

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ALTERNATE FORMATS:

RELATED HOLDINGS:

ACCESSION NUMBER: 1990.0100X

NOTES: There may be periodic additions to this collection.

## **HISTORICAL SKETCH**

The Indianapolis Area Chapter of the American Red Cross was 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. This largely volunteer agency is concerned primarily with assisting the victims of disasters. The initial membership was 3,024 with each person paying \$1.00 to join. The chapter's first service was providing food, clothing, medicines, and volunteer help to victims of a series of tornadoes that struck Indiana in 1917. The Red Cross provided similar assistance when a tornado hit Indianapolis in 1927. When the Ohio River flooded parts of southern Indiana in January, 1937, the Indianapolis chapter provided shelter for over 1,000 victims from Jeffersonville, Lawrenceburg, and Aurora at the Indiana State Fairgrounds as well as furnishing food, clothing, nursing care, and transportation.

Another well known service of the Red Cross is assistance to the military during times of armed conflict. During World War I the Indianapolis chapter added over 15,000 volunteers and expanded its current activities and added new programs. In addition to sewing and knitting millions of surgical dressings, the organization supplied services to the men that increased morale such as those provided by the Civilian Relief program which kept servicemen in touch with their families and assisted those in need. A major contribution of the Indianapolis chapter was the Lilly Base Hospital (Base Hospital 32) which was located in Contrexéville, France, and was staffed largely by Indiana doctors and Red Cross nurses. The hospital treated 9,698 patients from French battlefields. World War II saw the Indianapolis chapter with an even greater participatory role. Among the provided services were communications between soldiers and their families, transportation of wounded from airfields to hospitals, coordinating blood drives, and the caring for the wounded at Billings and Wakeman hospitals in central Indiana. The Indianapolis chapter performed similar operations during the Korean and Vietnam conflicts.

The Red Cross also supplies the public with first aid, home nursing, and nutrition information and education. The best known of these functions are the first aid, life saving, and swimming classes. With the dawn of the atomic age, the Red Cross assumed civil defense education in the event of a nuclear strike.

The Indianapolis chapter is one of approximately 8,000 chapters chartered by the American National Red Cross and is controlled by a local board of directors. Although each chapter is subject to the direction of a national board of governors as created by Congress, a large degree of individual autonomy is retained. The only mandatory chapter requirements are in the areas of financing, assistance to the armed forces, and relief to disaster victims. The organization was a former member of the United Fund and is currently a member of the United Way. In the 1960s the Indianapolis chapter extended its boundaries to include all of Marion, Hancock, Morgan, and Hendricks counties in central Indiana.

## SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

The largest part of the Indianapolis Chapter of the American National Red Cross consists of 11 scrapbooks of the organization's minutes, July, 1916–June, 1951, and 47 scrapbooks of news clippings and other printed material relating to the chapter's activities, services, and general information, 1918–1957. These portions of the records have been microfilmed because of their unstable condition. The minutes contain information about the organization's activities, finances, campaign progress, building operation and maintenance, appropriate actions to take in response to disasters and other crisis, election of officers, various committee reports and minutes such as the Camp and Hospital, Home Service, Blood Donor Program, and Civilian Defense. The minutes also include those of the executive committee reports and meeting minutes and agendas for the general meetings. The largest portion of the scrapbooks are from the World War II years, 1941–1945, and contain clippings from mostly Indianapolis newspapers regarding the Red Cross' contribution to the war effort. Information includes blood drives, financial assistance campaigns, and morale boosting activities for servicemen, and nursing. Other items of a non war nature include classes offered, disaster information and responses, and member's contributions to the community.

The records also include correspondence, publications, annual reports and organizational information, 1918–1978. Most of these items are of a general nature and reflect the organization's contributions both locally and nationally. There are also awards given for service to the Indianapolis chapter, Community Fund agreements, and information about William Fortune and his contributions to the local organization. There also are copies of the national organization's publication DISASTER from 1947–1950.

American Red Cross, Indianapolis Area Chapter Records, (largely meeting minutes) and scrapbooks, 1916–1951 are on microfilm.

Eleven bound volumes of the national organization's publications, the RED CROSS COURIER from 1922–1929 and 1937–1949 and RED CROSS MAGAZINE from 1951, were transferred to Printed Collections.

The visual materials consist mostly of portraits of William Fortune and other Red Cross leaders and events, and WWI and WWII era activities. Many of the images were numbered and described during the preliminary inventory. These numbers are listed at the beginning of their descriptions in the collection guide.

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### **Series 2: Microfilm Listing, 1916–1952**

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