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Guide to the Sister Agnes Johns Collection 1916-1919



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Descriptive Summary

Identifier	ICU.SPCL.JOHNSS
Title	Johns, Sister Agnes. Collection
Date	1916-1919
Size	.25 linear feet (1 box)
Repository	Hanna Holborn Gray Special Collections Research Center University of Chicago Library 1100 East 57th Street Chicago, Illinois 60637 U.S.A.

Abstract The Sister Agnes Johns Collection contains two autograph notebooks kept by a British nurse who served in military hospitals in England and Malta during the First World War. The autograph notebooks are examples of the psychological care that British nurses provided to convalescing soldiers. The entries are by the patients of Sister Johns in England and Malta and range from poems and personal reflections to illustrations.

Information on Use

Access

The collection is open for research.

Citation

When quoting material from this collection, the preferred citation is: Johns, Sister Agnes. Collection, [Box #, Folder #], Hanna Holborn Gray Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library.

Biographical Note

British nurses of the First World War carried the title Sister but were not generally members of a religious order. Professional military nurses conserved the two-tiered system that had been developed in British charitable nursing foundations in the mid-nineteenth century. Staff nurses or ward-maids attended to the basic needs of the sick and were charged with domestic duties to maintain the cleanliness of wards. Sisters or head nurses supervised the nurses and provided in-person care given to more serious cases.

During the War, Sister Agnes Johns served in military hospitals both in England and Malta. The Valletta Hospital in Malta received wounded soldiers from the Gallipoli Campaign of April 1915 to January 1916. Much like the military assault itself, medical care during the Campaign suffered from insufficient planning and ineffective communication. Medical bases could not

be established on the Gallipoli Peninsula in western Turkey because of intense shelling, and arrangements were initially made to evacuate the wounded to Hospital Ships that, in turn, transported casualties to Alexandria, Egypt. By late May 1915, the medical bases in Alexandria were overwhelmed by the number of wounded. New medical bases were established closer to the fighting, and the garrison hospitals at Malta and Gibraltar were expanded.

Scope Note

Nurses during the First World War attended to more than the physical wounds of casualties. They also provided emotional care in a variety of forms: soothing, comforting, offering reminders of mothers at home, or allowing soldiers to express themselves in writing or drawing. The autograph notebooks in the Johns Collection contain the written and drawn expressions of soldiers who were under the care of Sister Johns in various hospitals. Soldiers wrote to share their gratitude but in many of the entries, what they shared or drew reflected their attempts to cope with their vulnerable situation and the realities of war. The use of humor recurs in many of the drawings. The autograph entries of the notebook in Folder 1 were collected by Sister Johns in 1916, in hospitals in England and Malta (the latter following the Gallipoli Campaign). The autograph entries of the notebook in Folder 2 were gathered in 1918-1919, in Croydon Hospital, England.

Related Resources

Albright, Ivan, Medical drawings made direct from patients & in operating room in Base Hospital # 11 located at Nantes, France, Manuscript (Ms 1560)

Subject Headings

- Nurses--Great Britain--Diaries
- Soldier's writings, English
- World War, 1914-1918--Campaigns--Turkey--Gallipoli Peninsula
- World War, 1914-1918--Hospitals

INVENTORY

Box 1

Folder 1

Autograph Notebook - England and Malta, 1916

Box 1

Folder 2

Autograph Notebook - England, 1918-1919