Mending the Casualties of WWI: The Army Rehabilitates the Wounded, 1918-1920

Dr. Sanders Marble
Office of Medical History, U.S. Army Medical Command

30 September 2014
Dr. Frank Billings, former President of the AMA; wartime colonel and first director of the Division of Special Hospitals and Physical Reconstruction
Physical reconstruction is the completest form of medical and surgical treatment carried to the point where maximum functional restoration, mental and physical, may be secured. To secure this result, the use of work, mental and manual, will be required during the convalescent period. This therapeutic measure, in addition to aiding in greatly shortening the convalescent period, retains or arouses mental activities preventing hospitalization, and enables the patient to be returned to service or civil life with the full realization that he can work in his handicapped state, and with habits of industry much encouraged if not firmly formed.

Hereafter no member of the military service should be recommended for discharge from your hospital until he has attained complete recovery or as complete recovery as it is to be expected he will attain when the nature of his disability is considered.

- Army policy, April 1918
### Table 1—Physical therapists and physical therapy facilities in the Medical Department, U.S. Army, October 1918 to May 1919

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>1918</th>
<th>1919</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Physical therapists</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>378</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hospitals with physical therapy facilities</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


### Table 2—Physical therapists and physical therapy facilities in the Medical Department, U.S. Army, July 1919 to June 1920

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>1919</th>
<th>1920</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Physical therapists</td>
<td>558</td>
<td>516</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hospitals with physical therapy facilities</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Disabled Man Who Is Profitably Employed Is No Longer Handicapped.

Training for self-support is not only humane, but economical. The advantages already extended to injured soldiers at home and abroad must be extended to every citizen disabled in industry or accident.

Rehabilitation is the fundamental means of attack on the problem of disability.

Let us help the cripple in the future, not by handing out alms, but by giving him a fair chance to win his own way to self-respect and self-support.
What Can the Blinded Man Do in the World of Commerce and Industry

A blinded workman, without special training, operating a drill press in a large electrical works.

Sightless worker making packing cases for shipment of mechanical products—a job in which eyesight might well be expected as a requisite.
Green line – influenza pandemic
Red line – Armistice
IF YOU ARE A PATIENT

You want your health and strength and your hospital discharge as soon as possible. Doing something with your hands and your head will greatly aid in these. What you do here may help you to know and to do your old job better or may lead to a job you like better and thus give you a happier life. The “Reconstruction Aides” will bring you something to do while you have to stay in your ward. This “Something to do” may be things in leather, decorative woodwork, basketry, book-binding, drawing, block-printing, stenciling, metal work, bead work, twine work; or it may be some of the subjects listed below.

Social Service Aides in Building 93, Room 6 are ready to discuss any problem you may have. If you can leave the ward, you can visit the building named at the top of each list and try the kind of work you would like to do. The map will show you the way to the buildings. Come and see. Look over the lists.

**Buildings 93 and 94:**
- **Toy Making**
- **Working Drawings**
- **Tracing Blueprinting**
- **Reading Blueprints**
- **Architectural Drawing**
- **Perspective**
- **Freehand Sketching**
- **Topographic Drawing**
- **Slide Rule Use**
- **Gas Engine Study**
- **Steam Engine Study**
- **Power Plants**
- **Electricians Course**
- **Dynamo Tending**
- **Electrical Engineering**
- **Wireless Telegraphy**
- **Radio Work**
- **Blacksmithing**
- **Oxy-Acetylene Welding**
- **Forging**
- **Bookkeeping**
- **Salesmanship**
- **Journalism**
- **Telegraphy**
- **Citizenship**

**Building 95:**
- **Automobile Repairing**
- **Tractor Instruction**
- **Machine Shop Practice**
- **Engine Lathe**
- **Drill Press**
- **Sensitive Drill**
- **Drill Grinder**
- **Shaper**
- **Handwork in Filing**
- **Motion Picture Operation**

**Building 96:**
- **Artificial Limb Work**
- **Special Leather Work**
- **Cement and Concrete Work**
- **Lathing**
- **Plastering**
- **Rug Weaving**
- **Loom Weaving**
- **Gobelin Tapestry**
- **Sign Painting**

**Building 97:**
- **Carpentry**
- **Wood Turning**
- **Pattern Making**
- **Wood Carving**
- **Truck Farming**
- **Vegetable Raising (Greenhouse)**
- **Flower Growing**
- **Text Book Studies in Agriculture**
- **Poultry Keeping**
- **Breeding**
- **Farm Management**
- **Horticulture**
- **Bee-Keeping, Etc.**

**Building 98:**
- **Jewelry Making**
- **Clay Modeling**

The American Library Association has a library room in Building 94. It is many books on many subjects for your information and study. There is also a chance to read and write. Call in.

Agent of the Federal Board for Vocational Training—Building 93, Room 11.
Hydrotherapy
Electrotherapy
Gym classes
Baking (Sauna)

(actually, I couldn’t find a period picture)
HRH the Prince of Wales at Walter Reed, 1920
TABLE 2—Physical therapists and physical therapy facilities in the Medical Department, U.S. Army, July 1919 to June 1920

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>1919</th>
<th>1920</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Physical therapists</td>
<td>558</td>
<td>516</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hospitals with physical</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>therapy facilities</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>