



The Sisters of Mercy

During the American Civil War, the Sisters of Mercy played an active role in caring for sick and wounded in both the North and South. Mercy Sisters were put in charge at large hospitals in Baltimore, New York and Washington D.C., based on their experiences in the Crimean Wars and on recommendations to the Sanitary Commission from Florence Nightingale, with whom they served. In other cities, notably Cincinnati, OH and Pittsburgh, PA., Sisters started hospitals, operated orphanages and soup kitchens, gave work and job training to widows and young women without families and offered educational assistance to the poor.

The heroic efforts of Sisters in the care of wounded and dying soldiers in the field have mostly gone unrecognized by historians, from Shiloh to Vicksburg from New Orleans to Salisbury. In 1864, Lincoln commissioned a painting depicting a Sister of Mercy caring for a wounded soldier. This painting, known as *The Consolation*, was presented to the Sisters in gratitude for their service to the Nation. In 1924, a monument was dedicated in Washington, DC to the “Nuns of the Battlefield”, in honor of the services rendered by the twenty religious Communities representing the Sister-nurses during the Civil War.