

Dorothea Dix, Superintendent of Nurses: When an Activist Becomes an Administrator

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Abstract: Although the public praised Dorothea Dix's work as a progressive reformer before the American Civil War, her leadership as the Union Army's Superintendent of Nurses was privately criticized. Halfway through the conflict Dix effectively fell from prominence, and other Union nurses rose as leaders in the national spotlight. This paper explores why Dix was unsuccessful in this new position, despite her previous professional success, citing her maternalist beliefs about gender propriety, her failure to work effectively with fellow administrative men, and her conflict with her subordinate nurses. By examining Dix's story, one can see how a woman could spend decades perfecting her navigation of the patriarchal political and social scenes of the mid nineteenth century, and how these curated leadership strategies hindered her success in a new environment. The modern workforce is not the only place where leading women can fail to thrive in a new setting, and hopefully modern women can recognize the timeless warnings posed by Dix's years as superintendent: years of experience can blind one to the benefits of and need to adapt to a new environment, and new colleagues may take your qualifications gathered in other fields with a grain of salt.

Introduction

In 1861, US Secretary of War Simon Cameron appointed Dorothea Dix as Superintendent of Nurses for the Union Army despite her lack of experience as a nurse or healthcare administrator (Gollaher 1995). Dix's reform work followed the Jacksonian Era, which promoted jail and prison as effective institutions of punishment. Prison reform at that time intended to protect the voting public's personal interest over the larger 'public' interest of preventing crime and rehabilitating the imprisoned to better society as whole. As Dix called for states to provide facilities for their mentally ill citizens, she made an early call for rehabilitation over punishment for the mentally ill, departed from Jacksonian interest-oriented liberalism, and operated as part of an antebellum wave of reform influenced by the ascetic Protestant work ethic (Malsin 2015; Greenstone 1979).

Other rising significant social and political movements in the early 1860's included the abolition of slavery, women's suffrage, and temperance. While each of these movements had unique aims, many individuals were active in multiple movements. These activists and reform-minded individuals knew each other, exchanged ideas, and were part of a shared progressive American intellectual life. Dorothea Dix was no exception to this rule, as she personally engaged with fellow Victorian era reformers in America and abroad. Dix maintained contact with many of the reformers she met in England, and American abolitionist Samuel Gridley Howe served as an early mentor for her work (Gollaher 1995). As a result of this intellectual cross-fertilization,

activists often supported several progressive causes. Dix herself supported temperance along with her asylum work, although she only publicly advocated for the practice as a supplement to broader prison reform (Brown 1998).

Dorothea Dix was not the only female reformer active in the mid 1800's; she had numerous female reformer contemporaries. The sisters Angelina and Sarah Grimke both lectured publicly and wrote to advocate for abolition. The sisters were unique because they were members of a slave-owning Southern family, and thus challenged Southern ideals of feminine docility and support for slavery in one fell swoop. The pair also supported the women's rights movement, and wrote and lectured on the subject accordingly. The sisters' maintenance of gentlewomanly behavior alongside their progressive activism lent them particular credibility during their advocacy, which peaked in the 1830's (Durso 2003).

Another woman, Elizabeth Blackwell, did not begin her career intending to become an activist. Raised in New England by "reformist" parents, Blackwell grew up in an environment supporting progressive reform. Initially she worked outside of the realm of reform advocacy as she sought a medical education. Blackwell became the first woman to receive a medical degree in the United States in 1849, and founded her own practice, the New York Infirmary for Women and Children (NYIWC), in the 1850's. Blackwell became familiar with military medicine through her friend Florence Nightingale, and when the American Civil War broke out, Blackwell led the effort to organize the Woman's Central Association of Relief (WCAR) to coordinate citizen volunteers to serve hospitalized Union soldiers. Blackwell also supported the Northern war effort by lobbying to establish the United States Sanitary Commission (USSC) and by coordinating nursing candidates through the Ladies' Sanitary Aid Association (Frank 2008). While Blackwell privately supported abolition, she did not publicly lobby or organize on its behalf.

Harriet Beecher Stowe is best known for her novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, which depicted the harm that slavery brought to all that participate in its system. She did not become involved in reform until later in life, and entered the abolitionist fold as a moderate force with the potential to unify a movement splintering due to the radical rhetoric of William Lloyd Garrison. After unexpected strong reaction to the publication of her seminal work in both the North and South, Stowe worked hard "to cultivate an outward posture of true womanhood" and improved her reputation on speaking tours by maintaining "modesty and good sense" (Hedrick 1994, 239, 242).

Whether these women operated in men's spaces like Dix by partially conforming to feminine ideals, worked through women's organizations and activist networks, or published written appeals on behalf of their causes of choice, they all worked contemporaneously during the late antebellum period. Often referred to as the 'first wave of feminism,' the early American suffrage and women's rights movement emerged before the Civil War during Dix's rise as a prominent advocate. This formal push for equal rights occurred in part due to industrialization, which enabled women to work outside the home and be financially independent from potential husbands. It is notable that despite being a singular woman of influence in her field, Dorothea Dix did not support the women's suffrage movement, and held more maternalistic ideals regarding female propriety (Gordon 1995). Dix refused public speaking engagements outside of formal lobbying so that she would not fully enter the public sphere, which she found contrary to Victorian ideals of feminine propriety (Greenstone 1979). Dix confirmed her adherence to these ideals of femininity by finding herself "naturally timid...and diffident like all my sex." She went on to highlight that "in order to carry out my purposes, I know that it is necessary to make sacrifices and to encounter dangers" (Greenville Patriot 1851). Dix recognized that promoting these Victorian

ideals allowed her to distract the public from her political role as a reformer, and justify her work independent of a man's support (Greenstone 1979).

As the American Civil War caused upheaval in American life and culture, it also expanded achievable social, economic, and political roles for women. With large numbers of men on both sides of the Mason-Dixon line off fighting in the war, women took on the missing men's roles across the North and South. Women began to run farms and family businesses at unprecedented rates. Women also rallied their communities to support the war effort, organizing local drives to collect supplies for the military when their communities could afford to provide such aid. On the battlefield, women began asserting a new position as well. Besides the few that dressed as men in order to serve in the army, women increasingly entered the realm of nursing during the Civil War. Not only were women entering a formerly male occupation, but this situation presented a unique reversal of antebellum Victorian gender roles: female nurses were in charge of and cared for male soldiers. Like industrial workers before them, nurses enjoyed the newfound degree of independence through their work (Leonard 1994; Schultz 2004).

Dorothea Dix: Upbringing and Advocacy for the 'Indigent Insane'

While Dix held the name of a wealthy Massachusetts family, Dorothea's father lost most of his money following several failed business exploits. As her nuclear family descended into poverty, Dix moved in with her wealthier, financially stable grandparents, who housed and funded her education for the rest of her young adult life. Dix then became a schoolteacher, writing children's books in her spare time. This simple life did not last, and Dix suffered a mental collapse in her forties brought on by the intersection of a series of respiratory diseases, work exhaustion, and a debilitating bout of depression (Gollaher 1995). Several of Dix's friends planned a "restorative" trip to Europe for her, a typical treatment for similarly ailing wealthy Americans at the time (Gollaher 1993). The Whig Liverpool elites William Rathbone II and his wife took Dix in, and she lived with them at their countryside estate of Greenbank. As the time spent in the English countryside venue improved her state, Dix found solace in her intellectual discussions with the Rathbones and their reform-minded associates. These discussions first exposed Dix to the rising English reform trend of establishing specialized 'asylums' to rehabilitate and care for the mentally ill. While the Rathbones and their associates were interested in broad social and economic reform, Dix grew interested in this specific field of reform as she personally identified with the struggle of the mentally ill. Dix returned home to settle her grandmother's estate in September 1837, primed to engage in her newfound reform interest domestically, where only a few private asylums for the mentally ill existed.

Upon her return from Europe, Dix felt more comfortable in antebellum Massachusetts. Following a tour of a local prison, Dix was appalled at the conditions which mentally ill individuals endured because they could not afford proper care (Gollaher 1993). Often, the facilities housing these individuals were ill-equipped and focused on detaining the ill instead of improving their condition. Following in the tradition of the Massachusetts progressive reformers before her, Dix began her push for reform, systematically touring Massachusetts' prisons, poorhouses, and other facilities housing the indigent mentally ill to inventory the state's care for its less fortunate citizens. Dix summarized her findings in an address to the Massachusetts state legislature, where she described the horrific conditions she encountered throughout the state, and called upon her state's legislators to establish publicly funded asylums much like those she had encountered in Europe. Her lurid descriptions of "the condition of the miserable, the desolate, the outcast" and use of her maternal femininity to validate her compassionate calls for government-funded facilities to

improve mental healthcare became the key to the success for speeches to come (Dix 1843). Dix's lobbying of the state legislature resulted in a reform bill becoming law, making Massachusetts the first state with a public institution to care for its mentally ill.

Unsatisfied with ending her crusade on her home state's soil, Dix began touring the United States, surveying the local conditions of the mentally ill state by state, and lobbying state legislatures to establish publicly funded facilities to care for their mentally ill. Unlike other New England-native reformers of the time, Dix both worked in and successfully lobbied Northern and Southern states alike, as her cause and work overcame building sectional tensions, and her conservative social values endeared similarly conservative audiences to her specific progressive cause. Her relentless touring and lobbying work made Dix an effective advocate, and her work with important government men and other leading individuals publicly and privately secured establishment support for her cause (Gollaher 1995; Brown 1998; Tiffany 1918).

In the early 1850's Dix took her fight to the national level, and lobbied Congress to pass the "Bill for the Benefit of the Indigent Insane," otherwise known as the "Ten Million Acre Bill" (Norbury 1999). While the bill did not directly establish a national mental health network, it stipulated that every state set aside a certain amount of federal land whose sale proceeds would fund mental health facilities and care. The bill successfully passed both houses of Congress, but was tabled by President Franklin Pierce's 1854 veto, as he believed the issue should be dealt with by each state. It is believed that Pierce's Vice President, future President of the Confederate States of America Jefferson Davis was the main force behind the veto, due to his strong support for 'states' rights' (Lightner 1996).

Dorothea Becomes 'Dragon Dix'

Dorothea Dix's downfall was in part brought about by her traditional beliefs about gender roles, and their impact on her administrative policy as Superintendent of Nurses. Dix emphasized adherence to strict hiring and dress code policies to maximize the Victorian propriety within her staff, holding them to a similar standard as she held herself (Greenstone 1979; Brockett and Vaughn 1867). Dix aimed to discourage young, single women from becoming Union nurses, so that the corps could not be criticized for tempting soldiers and other male administrators with their "youth and rosy cheeks" (Hancock and Jaquette 1998). This is demonstrated in Dix's guidelines for hiring Union army nurses, where she limited the age range of applicants to 35 through 50, noted the prerequisites of "habits of neatness, order and sobriety" and to "dress plain," and stated that "matronly persons of experience good conduct or superior education and serious disposition will always have preference". These regulations also required two recommendations testifying to the potential nurses' "morality, integrity, seriousness, and capacity to care for the sick" (Dix 1862a).

While these rules appear excessive by contemporary standards considering the desperate need for medical staff, the new roles for women in the army did not come without resistance. Dix justified her policies through her belief that they improved the public's and government's opinion of her nurse corps. She recognized that women in such a public sphere faced extra scrutiny, and wanted to assure her organization's immunity to outside criticism.

Additionally, Dix believed her strict requirements echoed the standard set by the "perfectly plain" Florence Nightingale. While Dix did not meet her during her time in Europe, Nightingale was a "favorite" reformer of her English hosts, the Rathbones. Dix admired Nightingale's belief in the restorative potential in military hospitals—which resembled Dix's own belief in the restorative power of asylums for the mentally ill—along with Nightingale's influence as an independently operating reformer. Dix became so interested in the woman that she toured one of

Nightingale's former hospitals during a visit to Constantinople, Turkey, and unsuccessfully attempted to set up several meetings with 'the Lady with the Lamp.' English reformers were not the only people interested in Nightingale's work; the American public also "adopted" Nightingale as an ideal reformer and praised her accordingly. Therefore, Dix foisted the ideal of plainness upon her nurses not only because of her personal values, but also as a component of the standards set by Nightingale for the nursing profession in the previous decade (Gollaher 1995).

Although Dorothea Dix could adeptly work with powerful men, her time as Superintendent proved that she could not always maintain control over them as an administrator. Due to her past state and federal lobbying and skill of developing policy with politicians through her previous activist work, Dix seemed to be one of the most effective female advocates in the governmental sphere (Brockett and Vaughn 1867). Still, her attempts to enforce administrative policy over male medical officers and administrators as Superintendent failed. In order to exercise greater control over hospitals, the selection of nurses, and the assignment of female nurses, Dix attempted to compel doctors to work with her nurse corps, as many tried to prevent female nurses from working in their facilities (Gollaher 1995). When her negotiations with individual medical officers failed, she turned to the War Department's bureaucracy. The department issued Order 351, a compromise which gave the Surgeon General and Dix the power to appoint nurses, but doctors the right to independently choose which workers could enter their workplace (Townsend 1863).

Dix not only encountered resistance to her work on the ground, but also amongst her fellow bureaucrats. General Robert C. Wood, the acting Surgeon General in 1861, did not accept Dix's authority as a medical official and found her a "meddlesome civilian." Wood refused to work directly with Dix, and assigned her the task of securing shipments of medical supplies instead of coordinating her organization's work with its parent medical bureau (Gollaher 1995). Dix acquiesced in hopes of earning his favor, using her philanthropic connections in the Boston area and throughout the North, and even her own money to acquire the necessary supplies (Smith 1861; Dix 1862b). Nonetheless Wood continued to distance himself from Dix, currying the favor of doctors in the field who disliked female nurses and their organization (Muckenhoupt 2003). While these situations demonstrate Dix's determination to complete valuable work, they also show how the men who were supposed to collaborate with Dix refused to recognize her authority, both on a policy level, and a practical one.

Dix also frequently came into conflict with her subordinate female nurses. Female nurses and nursing candidates found Dix's job qualifications and behavioral regulations outdated, and believed she should recruit and accept larger numbers of nurses due to the overwhelming level of casualties and injuries sustained in the war (Gollaher 1995). One nurse's letters framed Dix as stubborn when she refused a young nurse candidate for her "good looks." The nurse remarked dryly that "it was considered indecorous for angels of mercy to appear otherwise than gray-haired and spectacled." Another nurse voiced a complaint at the dismissal, quipping that the corps already accepted her application and references and were required to complete her admission (Hancock and Jacquette 1998). This frustration even extended to nurses from coordinating organizations, as WCAR inspector and trained nurse Georgeanna Woolsey recalled the "professional indignation" Dix caused her by refusing to defend her fellow nurse from a doctor's scolding; the doctor had criticized her for dispensing unapproved care to his patient as she comforted the dying soldier during her inspection (Bacon 1899).

Dix maintained the "impatient," authoritative leadership style she forged in her days as an advocate for the mentally ill (Gollaher 1995; Brown 1998). Accustomed to operating as an advocate on her own terms and coordinating with male leaders to define policy, Dix chafed at the

limits of her bureaucratic role imposed by her male peers, and doubted the input of her fellow female nurses. Thus, Dix's refusal to change her leadership style to one more suited to her new administrative setting hindered her ability to successfully run her corps of nurses.

Epilogue

As other women such as Clara Barton and Elizabeth Blackwell emerged as more influential leaders of the nursing community through their work with the American Red Cross and WCAR, Dix's control over wartime nursing in the Union waned. Even after her fall from prominence, Dix did not stop working to serve the nurse corps. Much like she did before the war, Dix toured the country, but instead of asylums she visited military hospitals and sick soldiers. She also focused her efforts on "procurement and fundraising," successfully convincing members of the public to donate additional medical supplies and money to the war effort (Gollaher 1995; Tiffany 1918). Instead of ordering government action as an official, she returned to galvanizing other policy actors—in this case, public opinion about the war effort. In one case Dix highlighted the "distressing state" of returning prisoners of war as they sought medical care before their journey north. In a signature lurid appeal, she described the "regiment of skeletons," who were "absolutely covered in vermin," and claimed the "great strong surgeons...cried like children when they were obliged to deny the[ir] appeals [for food]." She still appealed to the government for assistance informally, encouraging a reporter and his paper to "stir up the Administration to some adequate retaliation for these awful crimes against humanity" regarding the maltreatment of Union prisoners of war in Confederate camps (Philadelphia Inquirer 1864).

Dix regarded her work as Superintendent of Nurses as a failure following her term of service, stating "this was not the work I would have my life judged by" (Norbury 1999). Despite this, her Civil War work was regarded as "monumental," and was another impressive feat that stood alongside her work on behalf of the mentally ill (Greenstone 1979). She also received several honors for her war work despite her controversial, figurehead status. The Army Nurse's Association honored Dix as 'President for Life' despite her ambivalence towards the group and her opposition to their central cause of obtaining military pensions for army nurses. She also received postwar recognition as one of many significant female leaders in the Union war effort, standing as an example even alongside some of the figures who upstaged her nursing career, such as Clara Barton. Despite her lack of field work and the primarily bureaucratic nature of her work, Dix even received accolades as the "American Florence Nightingale" (Brockett and Vaughn 1867). Today, her name has fallen out of history more so than some of her other contemporaries, but modern historians recognize her administrative work in the Civil War alongside her advocacy (Gollaher 1995; Brown 1998). For contributions to the nursing field as an activist for mental healthcare reform and as a prominent administrator, the University of Maryland School of Nursing even honored Dorothea Dix as one of its eight "nurse leaders," in the company of the other significant figures Florence Nightingale, Clara Barton, Mary Mahoney, Louisa Parsons, Lillian Wald, and Lucile Petry (UMSON 2014).

Dix ultimately returned to her advocacy work for the mentally ill and lobbied for their proper treatment following the war. She never lobbied for federal legislation on the subject again. When Dix was too old for the hard travel her advocacy work required, she moved into a suite of Trenton State Hospital, a New Jersey facility she helped establish. She died there on July 17, 1887 (Norbury 1999).

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Appendix A: Dorothea Dix, *Memorial to the Massachusetts Legislature (January 1843)*

Gentlemen,—I respectfully ask to present this Memorial, believing that the cause, which actuates to and sanctions so unusual a movement, presents no equivocal claim to public consideration and sympathy....

About two years since leisure afforded opportunity and duty prompted me to visit several prisons and almshouses in the vicinity of this metropolis. I found, near Boston, in the jails and asylums for the poor, a numerous class brought into unsuitable connection with criminals and the general mass of paupers. I refer to idiots and insane persons, dwelling in circumstances not only adverse to their own physical and moral improvement, but productive of extreme disadvantages to all other persons brought into association with them. I applied myself diligently to trace the causes of these evils, and sought to supply remedies... I tell what I have seen—painful and shocking as the details often are....

I proceed, gentlemen, briefly to call your attention to the present state of insane persons confined within this Commonwealth, in cages, closets, cellars, stalls, pens! Chained, naked, beaten with rods, and lashed into obedience....

Prisons are not constructed in view of being converted into county hospitals, and almshouses are not founded as receptacles for the insane. And yet, in the face of justice and common sense, wardens are by law compelled to receive, and the masters of almshouses not to refuse, insane and idiotic subjects in all stages of mental disease and privation. It is the Commonwealth, not its integral parts, that is accountable for most of the abuses which have lately and do still exist. I repeat it, it is defective legislation which perpetuates and multiplies these abuses. In illustration of my subject, I offer the following extracts from my Note-book and Journal:—

Springfield. In the jail, one lunatic woman, furiously mad, a State pauper, improperly situated, both in regard to the prisoners, the keepers, and herself. It is a case of extreme self-forgetfulness and oblivion to all the decencies of life, to describe which would be to repeat only the grossest scenes. She is much worse since leaving Worcester. In the almshouse of the same town is a woman apparently only needing judicious care, and some well-chosen employment, to make it unnecessary to confine her in solitude, in a dreary unfurnished room. Her appeals for employment and companionship are most touching, but the mistress replied she had no time to attend to her....

Lincoln. A woman in a cage. Medford. One idiotic subject chained, and one in a close stall for seventeen years. Pepperell. One often doubly chained, hand and foot; another violent; several peaceable now. Brookfield. One man caged, comfortable. Granville. One often closely confined; now losing the use of his limbs from want of exercise. Charlemont. One man caged....

Dedham. The insane disadvantageously placed in the jail. In the almshouse, two females in stalls, situated in the main building; lie in wooden bunks filled with straw; always shut up. One of these subjects is supposed curable. The overseers of the poor have declined giving her a trial at the hospital, as I was informed, on account of expense....

Besides the above, I have seen many who, part of the year, are chained or caged. The use of cages all but universal. Hardly a town but can refer to some not distant period of using them; chains are less common; negligence frequent; willful abuse less frequent than sufferings proceeding from ignorance, or want of consideration. I encountered during the last three months many poor creatures wandering reckless and unprotected through the country. . . . But I cannot particularize. In traversing the State, I have found hundreds of insane persons in every variety of circumstance and condition, many whose situation could not and need not be improved; a less number, but that very large, whose lives are the saddest pictures of human suffering and degradation. . . .

Long before reaching the house, wild shouts, snatches of rude songs, imprecations and obscene language, fell upon the ear, proceeding from the occupant of a low building, rather remote from the principal building to which my course was directed. Found the mistress, and was conducted to the place which was called "the home" of the forlorn maniac, a young woman, exhibiting a condition of neglect and misery blotting out the faintest idea of comfort, and outraging every sentiment of decency. She had been, I learnt, "a respectable person, industrious and worthy. Disappointments and trials shook her mind, and, finally, laid prostrate reason and self-control. She became a maniac for life. She had been at Worcester Hospital for a considerable time, and had been returned as incurable." The mistress told me she understood that, "while there, she was comfortable and decent." Alas, what a change was here exhibited! She had passed from one degree of violence to another, in swift progress. There she stood, clinging to or beating upon the bars of her caged apartment, the contracted size of which afforded space only for increasing accumulations of filth, a foul spectacle. There she stood with naked arms and disheveled hair, the unwashed frame invested with fragments of unclean garments, the air so extremely offensive, though ventilation was afforded on all sides save one, that it was not possible to remain beyond a few moments without retreating for recovery to the outward air. Irritation of body, produced by utter filth and exposure, incited her to the horrid process of tearing off her skin by inches. Her face, neck, and person were thus disfigured to hideousness. She held up a fragment just rent off. To my exclamation of horror, the mistress replied: "Oh, we can't help it. Half the skin is off sometimes. We can do nothing with her; and it makes no difference what she eats, for she consumes her own filth as readily as the food which is brought her."

Men of Massachusetts, I beg, I implore, I demand pity and protection for these of my suffering, outraged sex. Fathers, husbands, brothers, I would supplicate you for this boon; but what do I say? I dishonor you, divest you at once of Christianity and humanity, does this appeal imply distrust. If it comes burdened with a doubt of your righteousness in this legislation, then blot it out; while I declare confidence in your honor, not less than your humanity. Here you will put away the cold, calculating spirit of selfishness and self-seeking; lay off the armor of local strife and political opposition; here and now, for once, forgetful of the earthly and perishable, come up to these halls and consecrate them with one heart and one mind to works of righteousness and just judgment.

Become the benefactors of your race, the just guardians of the solemn rights you hold in trust. Raise up the fallen, succor the desolate, restore the outcast, defend the helpless, and for your eternal and great reward receive the benediction, "Well done, good and faithful servants, become rulers over many things!" . . .

Appendix B: Dorothea Dix, "Memorial Soliciting a State Hospital for the Protection and Cure of the Insane, Submitted to the General Assembly of North Carolina, 1848."

GENTLEMEN: --

I respectfully ask your attention to the subject herein presented and discussed; and solicit your prompt and favorable action upon the same....

I come not to urge personal claims, nor to seek individual benefits; I appear as the advocate of those who cannot plead their own cause; I come as the friend of those who are deserted, oppressed, and desolate. In the Providence of God, I am the voice of the maniac whose piercing cries from the dreary dungeons of your jails penetrate not your Halls of Legislation. I am the Hope of the poor crazed beings who pine in the cells, and stalls, and cages, and waste rooms of your poor-houses. I am the Revelation of hundreds of wailing, suffering creatures, hidden in your private dwellings, and in pens and cabins--shut out, cut off from all healing influences, from all mind-restoring cares.

Could the sighs and moans, and shrieks of the insane throughout your wide-extending land reach you here and now, how would your sensibilities to the miseries of these unfortunates be quickened: how eager would you be to devise schemes for their relief --plans for their restoration to the blessing of a right exercise of the reasoning faculties. Could their melancholy histories be spread before you as revealed to my grieved spirit during the last three months, how promptly, how earnestly would you search out the most approved means of relief; how trifling, how insignificant, by comparison, would appear the sacrifices you are asked to make; how would a few dimes and dollars, gathered from each citizen, diminish in value as a possession, compared with the certain benefits and vast good to be secured for the suffering insane, and for their afflicted kindred, by the consecration and application of a sufficient fund to the construction of a suitable hospital in which the restoring cares of skilfully applied physical and moral treatment should be received and in which humane and healing influences should take the place of abuse and neglect and of galling chains and loathsome dungeons....

But it is not to the State pride of the intelligent citizens of North Carolina that my appeal comes; it is to the liberal and humane hearts of this portion of my fellow citizens, its plea reaches; it cannot be rejected, it dares not consent to be put off, it claims with earnest importunity that its merits may be discussed, it would merge in oblivion the multiplied miseries resulting from past neglects and procrastination, by wakening to action the efficient energies of humanity and justice...

In Wentworth, Rockingham County, is an aged crazy man whose history even carefully abridged would fill too many pages to be introduced here. The principal facts of his troubled life are known to many in all the adjoining Counties. Can it be credited? crazed and wretched, he has been the inmate of a prison for more than thirty years! and that not for the commission of crimes. In Stokes jail, at Germanton, was a very crazy man, confined in an unventilated, dreary dungeon. Being tolerably quiet about that time, his chains had been removed, and he was rejoicing in being able to reach the low, grated door, because, said he "I can put my mouth close to the bars and draw in some air: dont you like fresh air," he enquired, "Oh it is so good"! " but oh is'ntit pleasant to look out and see the sky, and see the pretty fields; I cant see them here, now you are come to let me out;

I know you have; I want to get out; I want to walk about; I don't want to stay here." Alas I could render no relief, the unfortunate man was incapable of self control, and endangered life and property when at large, and there was no hospital to receive him in Carolina--he was poor, and so could not be conveyed to that of another State...

In Craven County, I found a crazy man incarcerated in a noisome, damp, cold dungeon; "placed there for safe keeping!" His condition was very wretched; and his prospects of relief and appropriate treatment no better: if left there he must become a confirmed madman....

The merest infant is not more dependent on parental care, than is the maniac upon the tender ministrations of kindred or of friends. In an hour he becomes the beneficiary of humanity: the helpless ward of his fellow-men: him must nursing, and watching, and skillful cares surround, else is he the most pitiable of human beings--out-cast and forlorn--smitten of a terrible malady, exposed to sufferings, and woes, and tortures of which no language however vigorously combined can be the representation. Have pity upon him, have pity upon him for the hand of God hath smitten him! Talk not of expense--of the cost of supporting and ministering remedies for these afflicted ones. Who shall dare compute in dollars and cents the worth of one mind! Who will weigh gold against the priceless possession of a sound understanding? You turn not away from the beggar at your door, ready to perish: you open your hand, and he is warmed, and fed, and clothed: will you refuse to the maniac the solace of a decent shelter, the protection of a fit asylum, the cares that shall raise him from the condition of the brute, and the healing remedies that shall re-illumine the temple of reason? Who amongst you is so strong that he may not become weak? Whose reason so sound that madness may not overwhelm in an hour the noblest intellect?

You will not, Legislators of North Carolina--Senators and Representatives of a noble State, you will not forget amidst the heat of debate, the clash of opinion, and the strife, for political supremacy; you will not forget the majesty of your station, the dignity of that trust confided to you by the suffrages of your fellow-citizens.

It is not often that you are solicited to exercise your functions in behalf of the unfortunate. That you possess the power, and now the opportunity of exercising a gracious, benignant, and God-like influence upon the present and future destiny of hundreds, nay of thousands, who pine in want and misery, under privations and sufferings, wearily borne through heavy months and years...this it is believed is a sufficient argument to determine your decisions in favor of justice, and of humanity and of unquestionable civil obligation.

As benefactors of the distressed whose mental darkness may, through your agency, be dispersed, how many blessings and prayers from grateful hearts will enrich you! As your last hours shall be slowly numbered, and the review of life becomes more and more searching, amidst the shades of uncompromising memories, how beautiful will be the remembrance that of the many of this life's transactions, oftenest controlling transient and outward affairs frequently conducting to disquieting results, and sometimes to those of doubtful good, you have aided to accomplish a work whose results of wide diffused benefits are as sanctifying as they are permanent: blessing through all Time--consecrating through all Eternity!..."

Appendix C: Dorothea Dix, Circular No. 8

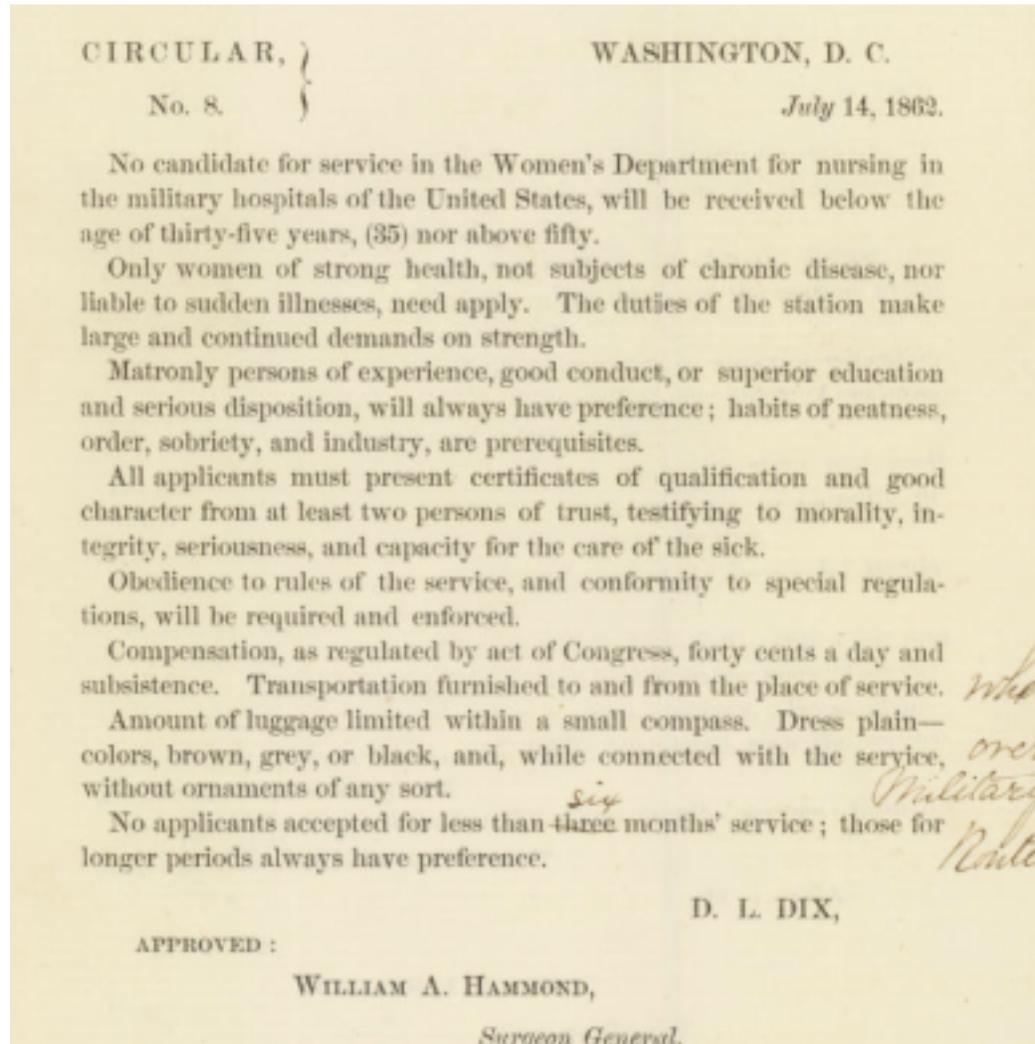


Exhibit D: Philadelphia Inquirer, Miss Dix Describes Returned Prisoners (May 17, 1864)

Miss Dix Describes the Returned Prisoners. I met Miss DOROTHEA DIX this morning (sister of Major-General Dix), the guardian-angel of our hundred hospitals, a glorious woman in a sublime cause. She was in a flutter of patriotic excitement over the barbarous treatment of our heroes who fell into Rebel hands. She had just returned from Baltimore, she said, where she had been at the request of the Secretary of War, to see our returning prisoners, and she wanted to tell all about it. She stood over the table where we were gathered, and her tongue ran on, as an indignant woman's will, the sad rehearsal interlarded with fierce gestures in the right place. I will tell you the story as she told us.

"I had just got to the wharf," she said, "when our flag-of-truce-boat, the *City of New York*, came in, and soon the poor fellows began to land, four hundred and fifty of them, from Belle Isle. Such a sight! It was a regiment of skeletons! Most of them had to be carried off on stretchers. Several died on the boat as they were lifted up. Nine died on the wharf, ~~hoping~~ their gratitude to God that, after all their privations, they were permitted to die under the old flag! A majority were so weak that they could scarcely speak, and in a hundred the brain seemed to be implicated. First, as near as we could learn from the few who could tell the story, they had been starved, systematically they thought, only a meagre scrap of musty bacon being brought to them, with water, so that they gradually lost their strength, and became mere skin and bone.

"Then they were left exposed in cold weather to freeze. They were in such a condition of hunger at any time that a man would give his blanket or his shoes for a bit of food, so that they became almost deprived of clothing. A majority of them had their feet frozen more or less. Many had lost their feet, and several had to have their legs amputated after their arrival in Baltimore.

"Besides they were absolutely covered with vermin, and in the most distressing state. I never saw any of our boys so filthy, never. They had been huddled together like sheep, and as their minds failed them and they became delirious, they gave less and less attention to themselves.

"Immediately on their arrival they were ordered to have a thorough bath. It was pitiable to refuse their feeble cries for 'food!' 'food!' 'for God's sake give me something to eat!' and our great strong surgeons whom I never saw shed tears before cried like children when they were obliged to deny the appeals and confine their patients to a simple diet and a bath.

"Most of them had to be carried to the bath-room, but I saw one apparently sturdier than the rest, standing alone in his blanket, and I ordered him to go alone to the bath. Without a word he went. In half an hour he was found there unconscious and helpless, his mind and strength having failed him together. An attendant lifted him up and supported him as he got out, and accidentally trod on one of his feet, when it came off! having been frozen to that degree during the dreadful exposure of the winter.

"A majority of the poor fellows are maimed or invalidated for life; many of them are hopelessly insane, also. It seems to have been the deliberate policy of the Rebels to return our prisoners in such a condition that they can never more be of service to us.

"Oh, sir," said Miss Dix, "if your paper could only stir up the Administration to some adequate retaliation for these awful crimes against humanity—and if that *can* not be, tell your people of Rochester to send their soldiers even more freely to conquer these savages, and secure protection through victory."—*Correspondence Rochester Democrat.*