

## ESTHER VOORHEES HASSON

Esther Voorhees Hasson, first Superintendent of the Navy Nurse Corps came of a long line of military ancestors. Her grandfather served with distinction in the War of 1812, her father was a surgeon (Major) during the Civil War, and her brother graduated from the Naval Academy, Annapolis, and served two years as a naval officer until his death in 1903.

Miss Hasson was born 20 September 1867 in Baltimore, Maryland, and was educated in private schools in Washington, D. C., and Germantown, Pennsylvania. In 1897 she was graduated from the Connecticut Training School for Nurses, New Haven, and engaged in private nursing for one year.

When the Spanish-American War broke, she was among the first nurses to serve with the Army as a contract nurse, beginning this duty 2 June 1898. She reported to the Army Hospital Ship (Relief) and served thereon until 14 November 1899 when she was transferred to the U. S. Army Transport (Sherman) for duty en route to the Philippine Islands. On 3 April 1900 she executed a contract as Chief Nurse at the Brigade Hospital, Vigan, Ilocos Sur, beginning her duty at that hospital on 14 April. When she left Brigade Hospital 7 February 1901 the Commanding Officer rated her service as Chief Nurse "Worthy of the highest praise".

On 1 February 1901 Miss Hasson at her own request on account of ill health was relieved from duty as Chief Nurse and appointed nurse under the Act of Congress approved 2 February 1901. She left Brigade Hospital and proceeded to Manila where from 10 February 1901 she was on temporary duty at the Second Division Hospital while awaiting transportation to the United States. Sailing 6 June she arrived in San Francisco 27 June 1901 reporting to the Presidio General Hospital for temporary duty. On 25 June 1901 she proceeded to her home where upon her arrival she was honorably discharged effective 15 August 1901 having completed more than three years of continuous service as an Army nurse during the War with Spain and the Philippine Insurrection.

In 1905 she again left this country to serve for 1½ years in hospitals on the Isthmus of Panama where several American nurses were pioneering in the health conquest of that vital area. She returned from the Canal Zone in October 1907.

The Navy Nurse Corps was established by Act of Congress 13 May 1908. On 18 August 1908 she took her oath of office as Superintendent of this new Corps having been selected from a number of experienced nurses.

Under Miss Hasson's direction announcements were sent out concerning the new Naval Nursing Service and the credentials of the applicants were carefully screened. All were brought to the Naval Hospital at Washington, D. C. for a written examination and personal interview. When the first 19 nurses were appointed in September and October they all reported for duty at the Washington Hospital where they spent several months during which time they received a thorough indoctrination in Naval Medicine and Naval customs. This method of introducing women into the Navy Nurse Corps received very favorable notice from leaders of the Army Nurse Corps and of the nursing profession in general. Part of the success of the pioneer women in the Navy's Medical Department can be credited to this efficient grounding. On 16 January 1911 Miss Hasson resigned from the Nurse Corps, USN. By this time the Corps had a strength of 85 trained nurses.

She was engaged in various professional assignments and was prominent in several organizations such as the Daughter of the American Revolution of the Spanish-American War Nurses.

When on April 1917 the United States declared war on the Imperial German Government, Miss Hasson again tendered her duty to the country and on 18 June 1917 executed her oath of office as Reserve Nurse, Army Nurse Corps, and reported to Ellis Island, New York, 19 June 1917 from where she sailed for Europe.

From 21 July to 22 September 1917 she served at Base Hospital No. 12 BEF; from 22 September 1917 to 27 January 1918 at the ARC Hospital No. 1; from 27 January 1918 to 7 January 1919 she was Chief Nurse of Army Base Hospital No. 66; and from 7 January 1919 to 30 March 1919 she was Chief Nurse of the Army Provisional Base Hospital No. 1. On 8 April 1919 she sailed aboard the S. S. Augusta Victoria arriving in New York on April 18, 1919. After a short period at Demobilization Hospital No. 3 she proceeded to her home 12 May 1919 where she was honorably relieved from active service in the Military Establishment effective 21 June 1919.

Miss Hasson's activities did not cease with her return to civil life. She established herself with her mother, Mrs. A. B. Hasson, in Washington, D. C. Miss Hasson was signatory to the Certificate of Incorporation Spanish American War Nurses Association as well as a life member of that organization in which she served as Vice President and later Secretary.

*Miss Hasson died March 8, 1942. in Washington DC. She was buried with military honors in Arlington Cemetery. Three Army and three Navy nurses served as honorary pallbearers.*