

**1 Dorothy M. Harrison describes the efforts of the Louisville Unit of the Women's Overseas
2 Service League to collect oral histories and then talks about the life of Sara Landau, who
3 served in the American Red Cross as an unpaid volunteer during WWI**

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6[00:02] The second member of the Louisville Unit of the Women's Overseas Service League
7who served in World War I is Sara Landau (her name is spelled L-A-N-D-A-U). Sara is now in
8her 92nd year and her health, if not her spirits, are failing. Her memory, too, is failing and so
9because we, very fortunately, took an interview – made an interview with her some years ago, I
10am going to reconstruct this in a narrative form, very much as it was published in the [Carry-On
1100:52] for June of 1983.

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13Sara La, Landau served as a volunteer with the American Red Cross in France, leaving from
14New York in September of 1917, and arriving in due course at Paris via Liverpool and
15Cherbourg. This was unpaid service, as volunteers then received no compensation other than
16uniforms, quarters, transportation, and food. Sara served in Paris, answering telephones and
17carrying messages, until August of 1918. During this time, she obtained a job for Suzanne Bacri
18(that is spelled B-A-C-R-I), a French daughter of a friend of the Louisville [Judah 1:50] family.
19American Red Cross headquarters thus had operators who could speak both French and English.
20Sara remembers that Suzanne's father brought his daughter to work, took her to and from lunch,
21and escorted her home in the evening, a very proper arrangement for a well-bred young French
22girl.

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24Sara's hotel in Paris was the Prince Albert and the office in which she worked, the postal office,
25was in the Regina Hotel. It was in Paris that Sara found Arthur Parsons, a Louisville friend
26reported missing before Sara left New York. She searched for him in American hospitals without
27success. When she tried a French hospital, there was no Arthur Parsons registered there, either.
28She turned to leave when, to her astonishment, she saw Arthur walking down the hall. Her call to
29him ended in a joyous reunion. Arthur, listed on the French hospital records as Samuel A.
30Parsons, had been wounded in the throat and in French hands all along. As he could not speak
31French or write it, he was at a disadvantage but had been trying to help during his convalescence
32by doing hospital chores. Thus, he was in the hall when Sara saw him. A cable to Louisville
33carried very happy news to an anxious family.

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35In August of 1918, Sara was assigned to Saint Nazaire, the port from which American
36servicemen were sent home. She acted as purchasing agent for the American Red Cross and was
37there until after the Armistice, at which time, she was reassigned to the hospitals in and near
38Vannes (that is spelled V-A-N-N-E-S). The Vannes hospital, base hospital, was not too distant
39from Saint Nazaire. She was a recreation director at this installation. She wrote letters for
40soldiers, collected and circulated a small library, set up a recreation room for ambulatory patients
41with a pool table, ping pong, chess and checkers, piano, musical instruments, and even a chorus.
42Sara would go through the wards also to see if soldiers needed someone to write letters for them
43or bring them books or personal items.

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1The hospital at Vannes was used at first only for non-coms and privates but, later, officers were
2brought here as well. They had a special recreation room, which was also shared by the medical
3staff of the hospital. Like other members of the staff, Sara had a room in one of the wings of this
4specific Vannes hospital. She believes that it was the 136th.

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6A vivid memory for Sara during her Vannes hospital days was the visit, in April of 1919, of
7General Pershing to the hospital. His visit was somewhat delayed and, in effort to make use of
8this time, Sara began dusting her books so that, all of a sudden, her door was opened and, sooner
9than expected after all, was General Pershing and her commanding officer. They caught her on
10her knees dusting books. Her C.O. went red in the face. Sara apologized but Pershing, lifting her
11by the hand, said he was glad to see her working. Pershing's manner to her and others was warm
12and concerned. Although Sara served into August of 1919 at Vannes, when the installation was
13closed and the remaining members evacuated back to the United States, she most clearly
14remembers Armistice Day of November 11, 1918.

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16She, a strongly religious, Jewish girl went to Saint Nazaire's church, a Roman Catholic building,
17both old and beautiful. There, while American and French were celebrating drunkenly and
18joyously in the streets, she and one old lady in a black dress, [sebuffs 6:50], and white coif made
19their celebration of the end of the war a prayer of thanks to God.

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21Sara's distinguished career as an educator followed her overseas duty. She continued active in
22community affairs and recently received the Blanche Ottenheimer award in Louisville for
23distinguished service to the Jewish community. Fortunately for us, "Mademoiselle Mees," as the
24children called her in France (they were trying to say "Miss," of course) – fortunately for us,
25Sara has been several times our president and a 28-year member of the present Louisville Unit,
26as well as a member of the earlier Louisville Unit, disbanded before World War II. Added notes
27by Sara indicate that Vannes is situated on an inland lake called Morbihan (that's spelled M-O-
28R-B-I-H-AN), that is a very old-world town with a beautiful church. Families were, at that time,
29living in some of the huge towers on the walls once used as part of the fortification. It, uh, was,
30to her, a most interesting area. She also tells us that she served two adjoining hospitals as a
31purchasing agent while she was at Saint Nazaire. One of these hospitals, uh, convalescent
32hospitals, was at Rochefort-en-Terre. It was established in the home, a very large and elegant
33house, having been given by an American artist, [ex potier 8:46], for the purpose. The other
34convalescent hospital was at Ploernel (spelled P-L-O-E-R-N-E-L) and was located in part of a,
35an old convent. Both Rochefort and Ploernel were near Vannes.

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37This concludes the narrative of the experiences of Sara Landau overseas during World War I.

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