

The Amazing Dr. Edward Ryan and the Work of the American Red Cross in Estonia



Dr. Edward Ryan

Although Dr. Edward W. Ryan's accomplishments were legendary in his own time, his story has now been all but forgotten. But as the U.S. Army lieutenant colonel in charge of the American Red Cross Commission to Western Russia and the Baltic States, his star burned ever so brightly in the northern skies from October 1919 to June 1922.

In his memoirs *All My Born Days* (1942), the first U.S. Commissioner to the Baltic States John A. Gade painted the following portrait: "Ryan proved himself to be a wild, fighting Irishman, constantly getting himself into hot water and me into a state of exasperation, doing things which I highly disapproved, even going to Moscow despite my having forbidden it. Absolutely fearless, often gambling with death, he did a grand job of holding high the shining fame of American charity."

Dr. Ryan's manic energy was exactly what the American Red Cross (ARC) needed in the Baltic States to get the job done under extremely difficult conditions. Not only fearless, Dr. Ryan was also a natural born leader and an organizational genius. When Dr. Ryan asked Loy W.

Henderson to join him in the Baltic States, Henderson wrote down in his memoirs *A Questions of Trust* (1986): "I simply could not turn down the opportunity to participate in relief work under an inspiring leader like Colonel Ryan." Dozens of other ARC officers followed in Henderson's footsteps. Along the way, Dr. Ryan pushed them to accomplish more than they thought they ever could. Dr. Ryan's men would follow him anywhere and do anything he asked them to do because they knew that he would demand nothing less of himself. While it should come as no surprise that the Estonian Government awarded Dr. Ryan the Cross of Liberty First Class in 1920, what is even more impressive is the fact that twenty six other ARC officers under his direct command also earned Estonia's highest honor. In the years that followed, Dr. Ryan and some fifty-seven of his ARC staff members also received the Order of the Estonian Red Cross.

According to documents in the Estonian State Archives, Dr. Ryan often butted heads with the new Estonian Government as ARC supplies went missing or when they disagreed on how best to provide assistance to the thousands of Russian refugees trapped on Estonian soil. But no matter how much or how often they disagreed, the Estonian Government had complete confidence in Dr. Ryan. When a typhus epidemic threatened to sweep across Estonia in February 1920, the Estonian Government declared a state of emergency and put Dr. Ryan in charge. On March 18, both the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* ran the same story: "Two governments are holding power in Esthonia. One is the regularly constituted executive body of the country and the other is the American Red Cross Commission, under command of Lieut. Col. Edward Ryan of Scranton, Pa. This commission has been vested with authority to take any measures, political or economic, to stamp out the typhus plague raging here." With typhus mortality rates running between twenty and forth percent of those infected, the Estonian Government was forced to take action. And Dr. Ryan was the right man for the job. A typhus survivor himself, Dr. Ryan was already a hero in Serbia for saving the city of Belgrade from typhus in 1916. In Estonia, he simply out-organized the epidemic. For example, *Vaba Maa* reported on the arrival of almost ninety American Red Cross nurses on March 1st to join the fight. Within three weeks, the veteran Dr. Ryan and his highly motivated team had Estonia's typhus epidemic under control, saving the lives of thousands of Estonians in the process.

The Estonian Government came to count on Dr. Ryan in other ways. When an Estonian diplomatic mission traveled to Petrograd and Moscow in late March 1920 by train, they brought Dr. Ryan along with them as an observer and unofficial advisor. It was this unauthorized trip to Moscow – reported in the *New York Times* under the headline "American Found Soviet Crumbling" – that annoyed Commissioner Gade. As Dr. Ryan's accomplishments were often the thing of legend, Commission Gade inadvertently added to the myth when he wrote that Dr. Ryan was eventually killed after being "shot in the streets of Teheran a year or so later in a dispute with the Persians, whom he had come to help."

The truth turned out to be something more mundane. Dr. Ryan – described by the *Chicago Daily Tribune* on September 21, 1923 as being "internationally known for his work in combating epidemics" – succumbed to malignant malaria while in Tehran on September 18, 1923 at the age of thirty nine. Buried in his home town of Scranton, Pennsylvania on February 11, 1924, his

fellow doctors remember him as the “greatest of them all.” The day before, when the nation's papers were filled with news of former President Woodrow Wilson's upcoming funeral, the Washington Post carried the following notice: “The Minister of Esthonia, Mr. Antonius Piip, has left Washington for Scranton, Pa., to attend the funeral services for Col. Edward Ryan, former American Red Cross commissioner to the Baltic States. The minister will place a wreath at Col. Ryan's bier in recognition of his work and assistance given the Esthonian people.”

The Life of Ryan

The youngest of four children, Edward W. Ryan was born in Scranton, Pennsylvania on December 14, 1883. His father, Jeremiah Ryan, worked at the local Dickson Foundry. Known to his friends as Eddie, the young Ryan was destined for something other than a factory job. While going to public schools in Scranton, Ryan earned his spending money by working at a cigar store before getting a job at the local newspaper: *The Republican*. At different times he worked in the advertising and news departments. In 1908, he went to New York City to study medicine at Fordham University where he graduated in 1912. He completed his internship and residency at St. Vincent's Hospital on Manhattan and at Kings County Hospital in Brooklyn.

Ryan's quiet life as a New York City doctor came to an abrupt end in 1913. When the U.S. Department of State went looking for volunteers to help evacuate American citizens caught up in the ongoing Mexican revolution, Dr. Ryan answered the call to adventure. After working in various parts of Mexico, Dr. Ryan ended up in the city of Torreón in the state of Coahuila. Everything went well until the day when Dr. Ryan was captured by a rebel leader from the neighboring state of Zacatecas and declared a spy and prisoner of war. And so began Dr. Ryan's first near death adventure.

As *The Republican* described it in his obituary, “the conventional order to 'be shot at sunrise' became a serious reality for Dr. Ryan, and the next morning, he was lead out to the post where he was to meet his death. His sentence of death was read to him, but he listened to it with such calm contempt and stoic demeanor that his enemies – especially the rebel chief – abandoned their plans for his immediate death. Better to say that they postponed their plans, for the performance was repeated the next day – and for thirteen consecutive days. Then, through some whim of their captors, Dr. Ryan and a few associates who had been taken prisoner with him were set scot-free and went soon on their way back to Mexico City. The local physician later denied the statements of his associates that he had been 'stoical' under the harrowing experience in the rebel camp, rather explaining that after the first few sunrises he began to get rather hopeful, and finally got used to it. The State Department of this country interested itself in having Dr. Ryan released and overnight he became a national figure.” While Dr. Ryan seldom talked about any of his own adventures, others – awed by his complete lack of fear – did that for him. And so the Ryan legend was born.

Service in Serbia

Not long after the start of the Great War in August 1914, the American Red Cross began

recruiting doctors to work in those areas of Europe hit hardest by the massive conflict. Dr. Ryan volunteered for work in Serbia. After securing the donation of the equipment he would need from an American Red Cross benefactor named Mrs. Helene Hartley Jenkins, Dr. Ryan arrived in Belgrade at the start of 1915. To the residents of Belgrade, it was as if the U.S. Cavalry had come to the rescue. A British volunteer nurse named Emily Simmonds provided the following description to the *Washington Post* (January 17, 1915): "The coming of the American unit under Dr. Edward Ryan was a godsend to the Servians, for at the time of their arrival we were down to our last bits of dressings and were living on short rations. [...] Up to the arrival of Dr. Ryan and his American nurses, the hospital was constantly in danger of artillery fire. Dr. Ryan's first act was to unfurl the American flag over the building. It was instantly respected, and conditions rapidly improved." In an earlier interview to the *New York Times* (January 15, 1915), Nurse Simmonds commented: "Dr. Ryan has become a real national hero in Servia, and it was owing to his raising the American flag over the hospital that anything is left of the city of Belgrade."

Under the title "American Doctor Saved Belgrade," the *New York Times* (January 31, 1915) ran an interview with Mrs. Slavko Grouitch the wife of the Serbian Under Secretary of Foreign Affairs. In this interview, the former Miss Mabel Dunlop of West Virginia stated: "I believe that Dr. Ryan actually saved Belgrade from destruction. In the city when the Americans arrived were some 15,000 of the poorer population." As Serbian military forces had withdrawn from Belgrade, "Dr. Ryan was practically in sole authority. He commandeered all the provisions in the place." Elsewhere Mrs. Grouitch commented: "To Dr. Ryan was entrusted not only the wounded, but the care of the women and children and other non-combatants, and he had to keep order in the town. This he was able to do because the people turned to him in their distress. When they learned that Americans were in charge of the hospital women came crowding to the gates begging to be taken in. Certainly Dr. Ryan inspired confidence from the first." The interview ends with her description of two letters she received from her husband in which Under Secretary Grouitch stated: "Dr. Ryan had saved Belgrade and its remaining population when the Austrians captured the place, and ... in the presence of the American Minister and other high officials, Dr. Ryan had been thanked by the Crown Prince for the great services he had rendered the Servians." Serbia posthumously awarded Dr. Ryan the Order of the White Eagle for his work.

Although already a hero of Belgrade after his first month on the job, Dr. Ryan's work in Serbia had only just begun. He spent a brief time spent as an Austrian prisoner of war before the Austrians released him so that he could continue running the Red Cross Hospital in Belgrade. When a typhus epidemic hit Belgrade in March 1916 killing thousands, Dr. Ryan organized his American Red Cross unit to fight it. Typhus killed two of his fellow American doctors – Dr. Ernest Pendleton Magruder of Washington, D.C. and Dr. James F. Donnelly of Brooklyn, New York – and knocked Dr. Ryan out of action for weeks, providing him with another near death experience. His obituary carried the following comment: Dr. Ryan "later admitted that despite his Mexican experience, the typhus attack had brought him closer to the grave than he had ever been."

When ARC Dr. Reynold Kirby-Smith arrived to relieve the infected Dr. Ryan, he observed to the

New York Times (June 17, 1915) that “the great epidemic was practically under control as a result of the methods introduced by the American [Dr. Ryan] and other sanitarians.” Dr. Kirby-Smith remarked that: “the country was one great hospital” with 1,500 patients alone at the overcrowded American Red Cross Hospital in Belgrade. When asked how many people the typhus epidemic had killed, Dr. Kirby-Smith “replied that it was a question that probably never would be correctly answered. They had died by the thousands, and the total no man knew.” By October 1915, Dr. Ryan was well enough to re-assume control of the American Red Cross Hospital which he would run until October 1916. In addition to saving thousands of Serbians from typhus, Dr. Ryan and his staff performed over 8,000 operations and coordinated Red Cross assistance programs for thousands of Serbian refugees across the country.

From the Balkans to the Baltics

After his tour of duty in Serbia was over, Dr. Ryan set off on the long voyage home across Austria and Germany. During his year-and-a-half in Serbia, Dr. Ryan had managed to collect several souvenirs of the Great War which he planned to show his friends back in the United States. One of these souvenirs was a “dud” artillery shell which exploded when it was roughly handled by porters at the Budapest train station. As *The Republican* wrote: “The station was wrecked and several people were killed or injured. Dr. Ryan escaped without a scratch – but the episode once more made him a prisoner of war. After he had succeeded in convincing the Austrian military authorities that he had no object in carrying the shell other than to collect souvenirs, he was released.” Dr. Ryan's reputation for leading a charmed life continued to grow.

After reporting back to the ARC offices in the United States, Dr. Ryan was not satisfied with sitting around while there were still people in Europe who might need his help. On March 14, 1917, Dr. Ryan set sail for France to take charge of several hospitals on the front lines. But when the U.S. entered the Great War on April 6, 1917, the American Red Cross called on Dr. Ryan once again and this time the U.S. Secretary of War granted him a commission as an officer in the U.S. Army. From France, the ARC sent Dr. Ryan back to the Balkans where he helped coordinate Allied medical services in Thessaloniki, Greece's second largest city. According to *The Republican*, Dr. Ryan “added to his brilliant record as an American Red Cross medical executive” while in Greece and “distinguished himself on his mission” while fighting against the malaria epidemics which threatened to decimate Allied troops in the region. In the process, Dr. Ryan may well have contracted the malaria that would eventually kill him.

When the Armistice was declared on November 11, 1918, Dr. Ryan – now promoted to the rank of lieutenant colonel in the U.S. Army – was dispatched to Berlin where he became the second in command of the American Red Cross mission to Germany under fellow Lt. Col. Carl Taylor. It was there, while helping repatriate Russian Imperial Army prisoners of war to Russia, Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania in March 1919 that Dr. Ryan first came in contact with ARC Captain Loy W. Henderson. In his memoirs, Henderson describes how he “came to admire and respect” Dr. Ryan. As Dr. Ryan's character was “impetuous and impulsive,” the rock-steady Henderson turned out to be the ideal subordinate thanks to his natural talent for administration and detail. For the next two years, the two men would work closely together.

From his base in Berlin, Dr. Ryan made his first visit to Estonia in May 1919. Although he appeared in Tallinn several days after the other members of his group, Dr. Ryan arrived in style along with a shipment of 312 tons of medical supplies for the Estonian Red Cross and the Estonian Army which he had managed to put on a ship under contract to the U.S. Government's American Relief Administration. During his week-long fact-finding visit to Estonia from May 22 to 28, Dr. Ryan met with senior Estonian Government officials, visited Estonian hospitals, and gave an interview to *Tallinna Teataja* in addition to overseeing the preliminary distribution of the medical supplies he brought with him. Throughout his visit, Dr. Ryan was helped by Captain Henry Reissar, the Estonian-American who founded the Scouts Battalion, and by Dr. Artur-Aleksandr Lossmann, the General in charge of the Estonian Army's Medical Corps.

In August 1919 it would be Henderson's turn to travel to the Baltics. In his memoirs, Henderson recalls that "Colonel Ryan informed me that since large areas of Finland and the three Baltic states – Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania – had been liberated from the Bolsheviks, the American Red Cross was considering sending a commission to undertake relief work in those countries." And so Dr. Ryan sent Henderson on an exploratory mission to Riga. Upon his return to Berlin on September 8, Henderson "reported to Colonel Ryan. The Latvian government ... was eager to have an American Red Cross commission in Riga. Lithuania and Estonia also would welcome Red Cross assistance. The mere presence of the American Red Cross in these countries ... would help to strengthen the morale of the people. The conditions in the Baltic countries were so appalling, however, that whatever aid the Red Cross, with its limited funds and facilities, could give, would barely scratch the surface of the need."

When Henderson described the harsh conditions facing anyone going to the Baltics, Dr. Ryan provided his signature response: "He did not appear deeply concerned about the complications and uncertainties existing in the area. He was the kind of person who liked to work in difficult and even dangerous situations, and it was he who was to head the [Baltic] commission when it was established. [...] He told me that he hoped I would serve on such a commission and, when I hesitated in replying, he asked me to think it over. Regardless of what my decision might be, he said that he would like me to accompany him to Paris to assist in organizing it." And so in mid-September, Henderson "went to Paris from Berlin to assist Colonel Ryan in organizing 'The American Red Cross Commission to Western Russian and the Baltic States,' as the new commission was to be called. For two weeks I interviewed personnel, procured supplies the commission would need, arranged transport, and so forth."

Thanks to this work and his earlier visit to Latvia and Lithuania, Henderson writes: "I had become interested in the Baltic and in the fate of the people in that area who were displaying admirable courage in the face of almost unendurable hardship and suffering. [...] My decision to accept the colonel's invitation represented one of the turning points of my life. From it flowed more than 40 years of work in the foreign field." And so it was that "on Friday evening, October 3, 1919, a train that been placed at our disposal by the German government left Berlin for Mitau [present day Jelgava]. Behind the locomotive and two sleeping cars for the 25 members of the commission were boxcars containing food, gasoline, and personal luggage, and in the

rear was a long line of flatcars with the automobiles [including the first ambulances to arrive in the Baltics].”

The American Red Cross Commission to Western Russia and the Baltic States

As soon as they arrived in Latvia, Dr. Ryan went straight to work in classic Ryan style. When the ARC caravan was stopped outside of Riga because Russian and Latvian forces were engaged in a fierce battle, Dr. Ryan learned that the city's residents were bordering on starvation. Fearless as always, Dr. Ryan walked right into the middle of the fray. As Henderson described it: “Finally on October 11 [Dr. Ryan] reached the river and, accompanied by a Russian officer bearing a large white flag, he walked as far as the chasm created by the uplifted drawbridge. A Latvian officer on the Riga side lowered a ladder and Colonel Ryan climbed to the top of the draw. Accompanied by the Latvian officer he completed his journey ...” For several days, no one heard anything from Dr. Ryan. But before he was given up for lost, Dr. Ryan returned having negotiated a temporary cease fire which would make it possible to get food to the hungry people of Riga.

Under Dr. Ryan's leadership, the American Red Cross commission set up offices from Helsinki to Kaunas – including locations in Tallinn, Narva, and several other cities in Estonia. Everywhere he went, Dr. Ryan would leave one of his fellow ARC officers in charge. At first, Capt. Henderson was put in charge of the new ARC office in Kaunas. As Henderson explained: “In order to maintain communication among the offices and to assist in making decisions in rapidly changing situations, the colonel was compelled to keep almost continuously on the move. For instance, his stay in Lithuania was brief because urgent problems awaited him in Estonia.” And so off Dr. Ryan would go – raising morale everywhere he went.

From time to time as he careened from Lithuania to Latvia and then to Estonia and back again, Dr. Ryan would often cross paths with the first U.S. Commissioner to the Baltic States John A. Gade. On a dark November 1919 day while on his way to the front lines in Narva, Commissioner Gade stopped to look at some wounded Estonian soldiers. In his memoirs, a demoralized Commissioner Gade wrote: “I was not only achingly cold, but also depressed at our being powerless to help [the wounded]. While I was philosophizing over both ills, who should come bumping over the snowy lumps of the country road, shouting at us to make way, but Colonel Ryan, with two decidedly English-looking nurses beside him and a truck behind full of medicaments, dressings, and food. 'Come along with me to the typhus wards, Commissioner,' he cried, as he stopped his cars besides us.” Dr. Ryan's positive energy infected everyone he met.

Dr. Ryan Goes to Russia

As many of his ARC officers were not trained doctors, Dr. Ryan tried his best to be everywhere at once – and almost succeeded. When the typhus epidemic hit Estonia, Dr. Ryan took charge of the battle for Tallinn while he put the ever reliable Capt. Henderson in charge of operations on the front lines in Narva. Like Dr. Ryan in Belgrade five years earlier, Henderson came down with

typhus just as Dr. Ryan's organizational methods defeated the epidemic. Once the typhus epidemic was under control, Dr. Ryan was already off on his next mission on March 23. Henderson wrote: "During the early days of my illness, Colonel Ryan had passed through Narva en route to Leningrad. Since he was the guest of the Estonian peace delegation, which was traveling in a special train that stopped only for a few minutes in Narva, he was not able to visit the hospital. He sent word, however, that as soon as we were able to travel we should return to Tallinn and recuperate." And so, "the special train carrying the Estonian peace delegation and Colonel Ryan returned through Narva on April 2, and in pursuance of a telegram I had received from the colonel from Russia, I boarded it. It was on this train that I had my first meeting with Soviet diplomats, several of whom were on the train as guests of the Estonian delegation."

This visit to Russia was actually Dr. Ryan's second. In his history of *The American Red Cross* (1950), Foster Rhea Dulles writes that the ARC "also supported the Russian volunteer forces under General Yudenich fighting the Bolsheviks, and advanced to within eight kilometers of Petrograd, where the Red Cross hoped to set up headquarters, before the tide of the battle turned." As would be expected, Dr. Ryan was right in the thick of things. *The Republican* reported that Dr. Ryan "was with the Yudenitch army, running Red Cross units ... when [General Nikolai] Yudenitch came within an ace of capturing Petrograd from the Bolsheviks [in late October 1919]." It is a good thing that this particular visit happened before Commissioner Gade arrived to take up his post and so went unreported at the time.

Everyone, however, could read about Dr. Ryan's March-April 1920 visit in the *New York Times*. On May 14, 1920, the newspaper reported: "The Russian Bolshevik Government is a 'social adventure become a ghastly failure,' according to Colonel Edward W. Ryan, Red Cross Commissioner for North Russia and the Baltic States. Colonel Ryan is just back from a surreptitious visit to Russia with the Estonian peace delegation, and his observations are contained in a report received by the State Department." According to the *New York Times*, Dr. Ryan's report "is said to be the first authoritative, first-hand information on conditions in Russia received since the return of the [William C.] Bullitt mission a year ago." Dr. Ryan "visited hospitals, schools, churches and theaters and observed intimately a community life which described as so hopeless as to have reduced even himself in the ten days spent amidst it to despair." Dr. Ryan predicted the Bolshevik regime would collapse within six months. He would not be the first or last Soviet observer to get things wrong.

After everyone was back in Tallinn on April 2, 1920, Henderson suffered a severe shock. As he described it: "Late that evening, as several of us were listening to Colonel Ryan's description of this experiences in the Soviet Union, one of the men who had been working late in the office entered the room with an envelope in his hand. [...] I said was so fearful of its contents that I dreaded to open it. Colonel Ryan offered to do so. He glanced at it, folded it, and said nothing. He did not need to. He knew I had read the expression on his face." Henderson's twin brother Roy was dead. Several days later, Henderson requested a transfer. Dr. Ryan talked Henderson into running the home office for the American Red Cross Commission back in Berlin which Henderson did from April 1920 until August 1921. During this time, Henderson made sure Dr. Ryan and his staff had all the logistical support that they needed for their work in Estonia,

Latvia, and Lithuania. Dr. Ryan would continue his work in the three Baltic States until June 1922. For two and a half years, Dr. Ryan did his best to help everyone he could from treating individual cases to organizing the ARC relief efforts for the 20,000 Latvians displaced by the major April 1922 flood of the Daugava River. Before he left the Baltics, the Estonian Red Cross and the Estonian Ministry of Foreign Affairs held back-to-back receptions in his honor on June 27 and 28, 1922.

A Story Left Untold

Dr. Ryan spent the second half of 1922 back in the United States. On August 3, 1922, Dr. Ryan was one of the guests of honor at a dinner hosted by the Baltic-American Society at the Metropolitan Club in New York to celebrate the U.S. Government's official recognition of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania on July 28. About this time, the Persian Government asked the U.S. Department of State for its help in identifying someone who might serve as a municipal expert for the city of Tehran. Because of his stellar record, the State Department recommended Dr. Ryan who soon signed a five-year contract with Persia's Ministry of the Interior. But before going back overseas, Dr. Ryan visited his hometown of Scranton in December 1922 and gave a public talk to his fellow doctors. As *The Republican* remarked: "Colonel Ryan was always silent of his own record, and rarely had anything to say of his work. He let it be known at that time, however, that he was planning to begin the preparation of his own study of his work and his impressions during the World War. This volume was never completed." And so, most of Dr. Edward W. Ryan's amazing story remains untold – including his final adventure in Iran.

Sidebar: Warwick Greene on Dr. Ryan

Almost everyone who came across the charismatic Dr. Ryan became had a tale to tell. Lieutenant Colonel Warwick Greene's posthumously published *Letters* (1931) include such a story addressed to a former boss whose daughter was looking for some way to help those Europeans still suffering in the aftermath of the Great War. Greene recommended that the young woman become an American Red Cross nurse. He ended his May 19, 1920 letter with the words: "You see I am really fanatical on the subject! Whatever lingering doubts I may have had on the subject were dispelled by watching Colonel Ryan and the American Red Cross wade in and knock the typhus epidemic in Esthonia and among the forlorn remnants of Judenitch's army, on the head. He is efficient and energetic. With the A.R.C. behind him, he cleaned up that situation as quick and as slick as one could want – and the conditions among that typhus-stricken, rotting army at Narva were unbelievable. I have seen few worse sights than Narva in January of this year before the A.R.C. got going; or few more encouraging sights that the way the misery and suffering melted away after Ryan got to work."

Sidebar: Dr. Ryan's American Red Cross Team in Estonia

That Dr. Ryan was a gifted leader can be seen by the number of people under his command who received awards from the Estonian Government. Along with Dr. Ryan, the following men won both the Cross of Liberty First Class and the Order of the Estonian Red Cross:

Lt. Clifford A. Blanton (died in Narva on March 26, 1920)
Lt. Rosser Bridwell (Purtse)
Lt. Lee D. Butler (Tallinn)
Lt. David Caz (Tallinn)
Capt. A.E. Franklin
Capt. Loy W. Henderson (Narva)
Lt. Roy K. Hockensmith (Tallinn)
Capt. Wilbur F. Howell (Narva)
Lt. William Hunter
Lt. W. Kay (Tartu)
Capt. F.C. Kenower (ARC Director for Estonia)
Lt. Rouel de Lassus (Jõhvi)
Capt. S.P. Massey
Capt. Archie McAllister (a fellow doctor)
Lt. Hugo R. Norbeck
Capt. George Pollants (Jõhvi)
Capt. John R. Ranson
Capt. Harry C. Rindge (Tartu)
Capt. Allen Campbell Robinson (Narva)
Lt. B.G. Rogers (Tallinn)
Lt. Willard C. Smith (Tallinn, Sanitary Inspector)
Capt. Lewis R. Tryon (Tallinn, Hospital Inspector)
Lt. Marcel R. Voyes (Purtse)
Capt. Hereward White
Capt. J. Atwood Whitaker (Tallinn, Medical Supplies)
Lt. George W. Winfield (died in Narva on March 28, 1920)

Several other U.S. Army officers under Dr. Ryan's command received the Order of the Estonian Red Cross including: Lt. James Harden, Lt. Hady Haulgate, Lt. Harry Major, Capt. A.B. Musa, Capt. Francis T. Tollin, Capt. Jay Walker, and Lt. Guy Wolfe. Some of the ARC civilians under Dr. Ryan's command who received the Order of the Estonian Red Cross included: Maude T. Barret, Elsie Graves Benedict (unit head), James Breslin (doctor), Daniel F. Cameron, Charles R. Clark, Neil W. Croch, Hazel M. Drake, C.W. Eddington, Angela S. George, Hugh R. Griffin, Mrs. I.K. Grove, William Harrington, Samuel Itsoch (ARC warehouse manager), William Key, William A. Jacques, B. John Manning, Orman L. Martin, J. H. Mason Knox, Margot McGregor (nurse), Janet C. Moore (nurse), Elisabeth Moseley (nurse), Katharina Olmstedt (head nurse), Anna Rowe (nurse), Clara Skoonia (nurse), Ruth Spencer-Beekam (instructor), Viktor C. Vaughn (nurse), and J. Whetaken (doctor). The names of other American Red Cross volunteers who worked in Estonia remain to be discovered.

Sidebar: In His Own Words – An Interview with Dr. Ryan

On May 28, 1919, *Tallinna Teataja* published a front-page interview called “Talking to Colonel

Ryan” at the conclusion of his first visit to Estonia. The full text of his interview follows:

“The writer of these lines interviewed the head of the American Red Cross Committee Dr. Ryan, who kindly explained:

“I traveled to Estonia with great interest because I have heard so many things about you from other American representatives who have been here before me. Commander Gade and Major Deverlau [Alvin Deveraux] let me know that the Estonian Red Cross is in desperate need of various materials. That is why I brought 300 tons of equipment and arrived without delay to get a clear picture of the actual needs of the Estonian Red Cross. I went to see your hospital and found it in pretty good shape. According to my evaluation, I can assure you that the director has done everything possible considering the circumstances. The lack of equipment and medical supplies was immediately noticeable. Because of this, I transferred the following things to the Doctor-General of the Army, Dr. Lossmann: 2,500 blankets, 5,000 pajamas for the hospitalized, 1,500 bed sheets, 1,000 doctor's coats, 250 nurse's uniforms, 5,000 undergarments, and 250 boxes of various medicines and bandages. In addition, I gave 10,000 pairs of undergarments and 100,000 cigarettes to the head of the Estonian Red Cross, Mr. Leesmant for distribution to front line soldiers, and 5,000 pairs of undergarments for the soldiers of the Northern Russian Corps.

“I will go to Paris now, but my position will be covered by Captain Franklin and Lieutenant Hallowell who will continue to distribute the equipment by request. I have received specific numbers from your Red Cross and from the Medical Unit of the Army regarding the equipment required, and I hope to get back to Estonia with these particular items within a couple of weeks. America feels great sympathy for Estonia and wants to continue its support until the end of the war. The Russian units fighting against the Bolsheviks will also continue to receive America's complete support.

“I consider it my duty to thank your government, military and Red Cross representatives for their kind welcome. Your Red Cross is young, but I am sure that these good men who have laid such a strong foundation for the local Red Cross with their energetic and fruitful work will take this organization to a high level.’

“Colonel Ryan together with the Doctor-General of the Army Dr. Lossmann and Scouts Captain H. Reissar paid visits to our ministers where our situation was more thoroughly explained. Colonel Ryan will travel to Stockholm, Copenhagen, Berlin and Paris and his explanations about our situation will definitely be of great value: his authority will be important in counterbalancing certain persons' intentionally false statements.”



American Red Cross hospital in Narva in 1920. *(Photo courtesy of the Library of Congress)*