

KEEFER CONVALESCENT HOME

In December 1915, it was announced that the residence of Francis Henry Keefer would be used as a convalescent home for wounded soldiers. 18 months after the announcement and over a year since the first soldiers were admitted, the Keefer Convalescent Home on Court Street, was a valued and essential service in Military District No.10 for returning military men endeavouring to heal. In June 1917, the Port Arthur News Chronicle published this article concerning the convalescent home.



SOLDIERS AT KEEFER HOME NOT WASTING THEIR TIME

While Convalescing Many of Them are Educating
Themselves for New Career in Life—The
Games and Recreations

A short visit to the Keefer Convalescent Home, Court street, brought to light many interesting facts and instances in connection with the daily events and happenings in the lives of the returned soldiers lodged there.

There are at present twenty-six men residing in the home, striving to regain health and strength before becoming absorbed again into the civil, commercial and industrial life of the country.

The staff required to properly look after their welfare number eight persons. These include Honorary Matron, Lieut. (Mrs.) Keefer, who has personal direction of the house and grounds; Major Brown, acting physician for the establishment; Sergt. Major Dixon, in charge of the soldiers' discipline; Sergt. Giles, training officer for those men who can undertake physical exercises and callisthenics, and supervisor of dressings; cook, two housemaids and a gardener.

The Accommodation

Although only twenty-six men reside at the Home at present, there is accommodation for thirty-two, six extra beds having arrived during the past week from the Military Hospitals Commission.

As no nurses or medical attendants have been included in the personnel of the Home staff, the returned men when they are ill, are sent to the hospitals. One Port Arthur soldier had his arm operated upon recently and two others will be taken shortly to the hospital to undergo the same.

Numerous recreations and occupations have been introduced to while away the long hours and days which the men must of necessity find wearisome. Cards and games are favorite means of relaxation and seldom does a week pass that one or two parties or social evenings are not arranged for the men. The visitors take candy and cigarettes and serve their own refreshments. A gramophone has been provided and there is a piano.

Two Men, Two Hands—Music

One little instance brings out the returned soldiers' plucky determination not to let unfortunate circumstances interfere with making the best of their abilities and opportunities. Two of the Keefer Home soldiers, before the war, were fairly accomplished musicians. In France, they each lost a hand. As a result of each man's inability to play apart, they struck upon the happy idea of playing together. The man whose right hand has been spared plays the air in the treble and the other soldier manages the chords and accompaniments on the lower

keyboard. The music they produce is really creditable.

A billiard table has been set up in a basement room and billiards and pool help to make the hours pass pleasantly. Quantities of magazines are being donated daily by Port Arthur citizens, and several of the soldiers are members of the public library. Owners of automobiles are sometimes generous enough to take a car-load of the men out for a spin.

Fatigue Duty

The duties of the men are few. Each man is obliged to make his own bed and one soldier a day is requisitioned for fatigue duty. Fatigue duty consists of peeling the potatoes for the cook, clearing the dinner table and drying the dishes. Occasionally they help with the gardens and grounds. While in the hospital or convalescent home, the pay of the returned soldier is the same as when on duty in the trenches. Part of this allowance is withdrawn to pay for his board.

Educational Work

Efforts are being made by several private persons in Port Arthur to utilize the garage on the Keefer grounds as an instruction room for the various arts and crafts. An old motor engine has been procured and the men are being instructed as engineers and chauffeurs. Miss Ptolemy, of the Great Northwestern Telegraph offices, has for the past month been giving lessons in telegraphy and the result is that one returned soldier is already qualified to take a position as telegraph operator. Mr. W. P. Charles is giving a course of lessons in shorthand and telegraphy and one of the city school teachers is preparing the men for Civil Service examinations.

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