

HOOSIER WOMEN AT WORK

STUDIES IN INDIANA WOMEN'S HISTORY

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Visiting Nurses, Tuberculosis Assailants, and Their Ball Family Champions

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In the State of Indiana the name Ball is easily recognized. With one word, its single syllable utterance brings to mind the fruit jars bearing the family name. In addition to establishing and operating a global business, the Ball brothers of Muncie also left their mark on the community through their civic work and philanthropy. From significant financial contributions for the construction of the local Y.M.C.A. and Masonic Temple buildings, to their involvement with the establishment of Ball State University and Ball Memorial Hospital, the Ball brothers regularly invested in the well-being and growth of their community. The understanding of the impact of the Ball family on Delaware County should not be limited to the stories of the Ball brothers, however. While varying in backgrounds, age, and interests, the Ball wives were active in their community as well. During the first decades of the 20th century they continually worked to improve public health in their region, and personally invested time and energy in improving sanitation, hygiene, and medical access in Muncie, Indiana.

During my presentation I will explore the ways in which the women of the Ball family played an active and relevant role in the public health of early 20th century Muncie. Mainly focusing on the stories of Bertha Crosley Ball and Sarah Rogers Ball, I will discuss how these two women from very different backgrounds each found themselves involved in local public health. Sarah Rogers Ball, a registered nurse and wife of Dr. Lucius L. Ball, was an early graduate of the Buffalo General Hospital School of Nursing in Buffalo, NY. She was born the daughter of Irish immigrants. After her marriage to Dr. Ball she no longer served as a practicing nurse, but never gave up her interest and involvement in medicine and health in Indiana. In contrast to her sister-in-law, Bertha Crosley Ball had no medical training, but also showed a strong interest in community health. The daughter of a Universalist minister, Bertha studied social work at Vassar College, and had taken numerous voyages abroad with her parents in escorting travel parties to foreign countries. After marrying Edmund B. Ball, Bertha took on an active schedule of social and civic work in Muncie with public health becoming a central focus.

Together these two women found themselves involved at varying levels with groups such as the Visiting Nurses Association of Muncie, the Delaware-Blackford Medical Society Auxiliary, the Delaware County Tuberculosis Association, as well as the Delaware County Welfare Board and the American Red Cross. While the Ball women's involvement in public health organizations may not receive the same level

of attention as the civic work of their husbands, their work is no less important. This talk will explore the importance of the organizations they worked with and the vitality of their involvement.

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