

IRENE WALBRIDGE – NEW HAMPSHIRE
NATIONAL PRESIDENT 1927-1928
AMERICAN LEGION AUXILIARY

Irene McIntyre Walbridge was born in Ontario, Canada, May 8, 1891 daughter of a Salvation Army colonel. In November of 1917 at the young age of 26, Irene and her sister Gladys were in France, on the front lines of World War I. They were known as the “Doughnut Sisters” baking doughnuts and distributing them with coffee to the troops. Irene traveled throughout France, and while in Cheppy she worked in a triage for the wounded.

When the signing of the Armistice took place at Thiaucourt, the building she was working in was struck the night before by a shell during a bombardment, however Irene was not injured. After the Armistice she spent the winter caring for the soldiers in devastated villages which quartered American Troops.

Irene received many citations and was recommended for the Distinguished Service Cross. Her wartime experience led to a film offer from Hollywood which she refused. Her interest lay in public speaking about the Salvation Army throughout the USA.

In 1921 a speaking tour led her to Peterborough, NH where she encountered Robert E. Walbridge, a native of a small town in New Hampshire, whom she had first met three years earlier at a canteen in Roulecourt, France. They married and settled in Peterborough.

She was Department President of NH American Legion Auxiliary for two years, 1924 & 1925 where she traveled 20,000 miles inspiring members to greater achievements. Membership in New Hampshire ranked proportionally second in the Nation with her leadership. Under her direction the finances of the Department were completely reorganized and a budget system was adopted, resulting that a balance had been created strictly for Department use in excess of the former annual income. Under her watch she put in place every activity established by the National headquarters, in the actual operation in NH.

On that record, the delegates at its Paris France convention in 1927 elected her National President to lead the American Legion Auxiliary organization.

Mrs. Walbridge brought to the leadership of the Auxiliary the same resourcefulness and vision that had carried her through her war time experiences. The need of more comprehensive publicity which would better present the aims and activities of the Auxiliary to the public had long been felt in the organization. Two months into her administration, the publicity work was established and supplying the organization with its services.

The expressed aim of National President Walbridge was to provide full cooperation with The American Legion in all its work, through increased membership to make the Auxiliary a more effective aid to the Legion programs.

Mrs. Irene Walbridge died, January 19, 1992 at the age of 100 in Peterborough, NH.

Thank you Irene for your dedication, courage and valor displayed in your service to America in your 100 years.