United We Serve Relief Efforts of the Women of New York City During the Civil War

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UNITED WE SERVE
Relief Efforts of the Women of New York City During the Civil War

by
Phyllis Korzilius

A thesis presented to the Faculty of the School of Graduate Studies in partial fulfillment of the Degree of Master of Arts

Western Michigan University
Kalamazoo, Michigan
June, 1963
PREFACE

In high school and college most of my study in the Civil War period centered in the great battles, generals, political figures, and national events that marked the American scene between 1861 and 1865. Because the courses were of a broad survey type, it would have been presumptuous to expect any special attention to such issues as the role of women in the war. However, a probe of the more common or personal aspects of the "era of conflict" provides a deeper insight of the era as well as more knowledge. For this reason I have examined the work of the women of New York City during the Civil War.

In collecting materials for my study, I found little available on the activity of women during the war. Even those groups closely associated with Civil War research have not yet synthesized their collections relating to women's efforts. For example, James I. Robertson, executive director of the U.S. Civil War Centennial Commission, answered my query for information by saying that his group is just now in the process of formulating a booklet commemorating women's war work. Enoch Squires, research associate for the New York State Civil War Centennial Commission, replied that the facets of Civil War history his organization has investigated do not include the role of New York women in the war.

A thorough review of the files of the New York Daily Times from 1861 to 1864 furnished the bulk of the information about women's
relief efforts. Diary of a Union Lady 1861-1865, edited by Harold Hammond and published in 1962, helped me set the stage for New York women's activity. The author, Maria Lydig Daly, was the wife of Judge Charles Daly of New York City. Mrs. Daly wrote about life in New York City, the activities of its upper class, and the impact of the war on the city. The diary contains references to the work of New York women in the war, the Sanitary Commission, and the celebrated Sanitary Fair.
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INTRODUCTION

A most interesting chapter of Civil War history is the role of women in the war. Frank Moore aptly described the significance of women's relief work in his introduction to *Women of the War*:

The story of the war will never be fully or fairly written if the achievements of women in it are untold. They do not figure in the official reports; they are not gazetted for deeds as gallant as ever were done; the names of thousands are unknown beyond the neighborhood where they lived, or the hospitals where they loved to labor; yet there is no feature in our war more creditable to us as a nation, none from its positive newness so well worthy of record.  

The relief efforts of the women of New York City are not an isolated incident in the life and history of American women. In order to better understand their war work, it is important to know how the women were prepared for this work and what they gained from it. The purpose of this paper is to examine the relief work of the women of New York City in terms of its place in the development of American women's status. The three major considerations are (1) what was women's status before the war and what enabled them to assume a role in war relief? (2) what did the women of New York do during the war? and (3) how did this work affect women's status?

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PART I

BACKGROUND FOR WOMEN'S ROLE IN CIVIL WAR RELIEF
CHAPTER I

POSITION OF WOMEN IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

The two most fundamental forces in American life in the first half of the nineteenth century were the Industrial Revolution and the westward movement. Both had a part in the development of American women's social and economic condition.

The gift of the industrial age to the women of the Northeast was wider employment horizons. Factories needed cheap mass labor. A large, hitherto unexploited reserve of female labor, anxious either to escape the routine of housework or the dull atmosphere of rural community life, was available. What is more, the price of women's help was right. Soon women were working by the thousands in the brick mill buildings that sprang up beside every creek and river throughout New England.

Something of the equalitarian democratic spirit of the western frontier affected women's status also. In the frontier settlement, where women faced hardships and loneliness equally with men, women tended to be accepted as social equals. Alice Tyler, author of Freedom's Ferment, recorded that "In frontier church and camp meeting and school women took their place with scarcely a comment."²

Although the Industrial Revolution and the westward movement represented a broadening of opportunities for women, they did not effect a radical change in women's status. Traditional concepts of women's place in society were strong and not easily altered. Most

²Alice F. Tyler, Freedom's Ferment (Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota Press, 1944), p. 424.
men regarded women as an inferior sex both mentally and morally. They further believed a woman's place was in the home and her only function in life should be the rearing of children. As a result, women's education, employment opportunities, and legal rights were restricted.

Education

Actually no educational standards existed for women in the first half of the nineteenth century. Daughters of wealthy families attended "charm schools," where they were taught reading, writing, rudimentary arithmetic, embroidering, and enough music "to sing or play pretty little airs to entertain company." The field of higher education, however, was largely out of bounds for a woman.

Some attempts were made between 1800 and the Civil War to broaden women's educational opportunities. Emma Willard founded Troy Female Seminary in 1821 to train women teachers. The curriculum offered courses in mathematics, history, geography, and physics. Oberlin College became a coeducational institution in 1833. The College's curriculum for women, however, did not constitute a real step forward in women's professional training. College officials felt women's calling was motherhood and had no desire to encourage neglect of the home by training women for legal, clerical or medical careers.

The most significant advance in women's education was the founding of Mount Holyoke College in 1837. For the first time the curri-

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culum for women was on the same level--with the exception of a foreign languages program--as that of men's colleges. Prospective students also had to pass the same rigid examinations as those given male students elsewhere. Woman suffrage historian Eleanor Flexner feels the standards established at Mount Holyoke College prepared the way for such post-Civil War institutions as Vassar, Smith, Wellesley, and Bryn Mawr.  

If a woman did acquire higher education, she still faced the problem of limited professional opportunity. Society approved of teaching careers for women, but medical or theological training was an entirely different matter. Alice Tyler comments that the few women who did break through these professional barriers were justly famous.

One of the earliest women physicians, Dr. Harriot Hunt, began her practice in 1835. In the late 1840's the Blackwell sisters, Elizabeth and Emily, earned medical degrees. Antoinette Brown was the first woman to obtain theological training. She convinced Oberlin College officials to admit her as a theological student, and she graduated in 1850. At first no church would accept her, for clergymen believed Scripture frowned on women's participation in church leadership.

Employment

Nineteenth century women faced the same problem of inequality in employment as they did in education. By 1850 almost twenty-four

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5 Ibid., p. 36.

6 Tyler, p. 431.
per cent of the laborers in industry were women. The greater share of them worked in textile mills or clothing, shoe, and millinery factories. Women's major problem was poor wages. It was estimated that in 1833 a woman earned only one-fourth the wages a man did for the same job. In Philadelphia a working woman's wages for a week's work of about fourteen hours a day were less than a man's wages for a single day of the same work.

Women attempted to improve their working conditions through organized labor unions, but lack of money, experience, and time prevented their success. The United Tailoresses Society of New York and the Lady Shoe Binders of Lynn, Massachusetts established short-lived and unsuccessful unions in the 1830's. The only stable women's union was the Lowell Female Labor Reform Association. Sarah Bagley, the first woman trade unionist of note in America, led the Lowell women from 1845 to 1846. By May, 1845, the union numbered six hundred members. Largely under the leadership of Miss Bagley, similar groups appeared in other factory towns, such as Manchester, Waltham, Dover, Nashua, and Fall River.

After Miss Bagley's retirement from the labor scene in 1846, the Female Labor Reform Associations lingered only a little longer. As Eleanor Flexner states, "It was not in the cards for women, alone and unaided to build their own labor organization."

Legal Rights

The nineteenth century woman's lack of legal identity was perhaps her greatest burden. Legally she was classified as a minor--

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7 Flexner, p. 78.
8 Ibid., p. 53.
9 Ibid., p. 60.
under her husband's rule if married; the ward of male relatives if unmarried. Contemporary jurist David Dudley Field, writing in 1860, summarized laws relating to married women as follows:

A married woman cannot sue for her services, as all she earns legally belongs to the husband, whereas his earnings belong to himself, and the wife legally has no interest in them. Where children have property and both parents are living, the father is the guardian. In case of the wife's death without a will, the husband is entitled to all her personal property and to a life interest in the whole of her real estate to the entire exclusion of her children, even though this property may have come to her through a former husband and the children of that marriage still be living. If a husband die without a will, the widow is entitled to one-third of the personal property and to a life interest in one-third only of the real estate. In case a wife be personally injured, either in reputation by slander, or in body by accident, compensation must be recovered in the joint name of herself and her husband, and when recovered it belongs to him. . . . The father may by deed or will appoint a guardian for the minor children, who may thus be taken entirely away from the jurisdiction of the mother at his death. 10

Legal reform of women's status came slowly. Women made their first gains in the area of property rights. By 1850 such states as Indiana, Pennsylvania, New York, California, and Wisconsin granted independent property rights to married women. 11

Women's educational, economic, and legal status in the first half of the nineteenth century was therefore far from satisfactory. The new industrial age and the democratic spirit of the westward movement had increased women's independence somewhat, but tradition still limited any progress to a snail's pace. However, of greater significance than status itself was women's attitude. American women

10 Tyler, p. 426.

became self-conscious of their place in society in the years before the war and began to recognize the need to improve their position. Only a few of them dared or cared to assert themselves, but they were an indefatigable minority, determined to take a back seat to men no longer.
CHAPTER II

THE PREPARATION OF WOMEN FOR THEIR ROLE IN CIVIL WAR RELIEF

Democratic-Humanitarian Spirit of Period

The time was right for women to begin their agitation for an improved social, economic, and political position. We have mentioned that the two fundamental forces in American history from 1800 to the Civil War were the Industrial Revolution and the westward movement. Another major force, probably derived from the above two, was the spirit of democratic-humanitarianism which manifested itself in a series of reform movements that swept America. Especially strong in the North, these reform movements attacked privilege and materialism and stressed freedom and equality.

Andrew Jackson became the symbol of the common man's fight against privilege. Jackson's attack on the National Bank appealed to every prejudice against monopoly, aristocracy, and wealth. Hard money, simple virtues, and the common man became the keystones of political democracy in the age of Jackson.

Religious reformers, fearing the effects of liberal doctrinal interpretations, advocated a return to the fundamental principles of Christian faith. Great spiritual fervor gripped the evangelical church groups in New England and upper New York. Revivals spread like wildfire, and the area became known as the "burned over district." Utopian, communistic social schemes were popular. Generally
founded by men who rebelled against the materialism of the industrial age, these idealistic societies represented an attempt to return to the simple life or morality. Religious groups also rallied under the temperance banner. From the pulpit clergymen preached against the evils of drink, and temperance societies spread throughout the Northeast.

Democratic-humanitarian ferment reached a climax in the fight against slavery. Antislavery agitation soon assumed the proportions of a moral crusade. Resentment of privilege and rebellion against materialism proved to be minor issues compared to the abolition movement. As Civil War historian Avery Craven notes, "Gradually the effort to free the Negro slaves on Southern plantations brought to a focus most of the sentiments engendered by all injustice and set the reformer at the task of bringing low the perfect aristocrat who held these slaves in bondage." 12

Women's Participation in Democratic-Humanitarian Movements

To avoid involvement in the debate and democratic-humanitarian ferment of the era, women would have had to exist in a vacuum. Within reform movements women found many barriers to their freedom of expression removed. As a result they enthusiastically supported these movements and willingly helped spread the reform message no matter how unpopular the cause or violent the opposition.

The doctrines of Transcendentalism and free thought encouraged talented and able women to express themselves. Indeed, one of the

intellectual leaders of the transcendental movement was Margaret Fuller. Resentful of the popular feeling that women's minds were inferior to men's, she demanded that women be accepted intellectually and advanced professionally without discrimination. Early in the 1840's she wrote *The Great Law Suit or Man vs. Woman*. Republished in 1845 under the more familiar title *Woman in the Nineteenth Century*, it constituted the first significant statement by an American about the position of women.

The Scotland born Frances Wright, a more radical and flamboyant character than Margaret Fuller, crusaded for freedom of thought and belief. In 1828 she visited the community of New Harmony, Indiana, and met its founder, Robert Dale Owen. The two became close friends and coproprietors of *The Free Enquirer*, one of the leading free thought journals in the nation. Miss Wright lectured extensively on such topics as adult education, free schools, temperance, and woman's rights.

Whereas Margaret Fuller and Frances Wright expressed themselves on many issues and lent verbal support to various reform efforts, other women interested themselves in reforming specific undemocratic or inhumane social conditions and probably achieved more lasting results. Dorothea Dix, for example, worked untiringly to reform conditions in penal and mental institutions. Unaided and unescorted, she visited and inspected prisons and insane asylums and reported her findings to the state legislatures. Her work resulted in the first prison and hospital reform legislation.
Women were also active in the temperance crusade. Its general lack of popularity throughout the Northeast did not dampen women's enthusiasm; neither did the outright hostility of temperance leaders. Women formed Daughters of Temperance societies to support the work of male temperance groups.

Susan B. Anthony, active in many reform movements and most well known for her woman suffrage work, joined one of these women's temperance societies in her hometown of Rochester. In January, 1852, she attended a convention of all New York temperance societies in Albany. When she and her associates attempted to take part in the meeting, they were informed that ladies were there to listen, not to talk. In retaliation Miss Anthony organized the Woman's State Temperance Association, which had no affiliation with men's groups.

Whereas leaders of the temperance movement sought to muffle the voice of women members, the abolitionists generally welcomed women speakers in their campaigns. Foremost among female abolitionists were the Grimke sisters, Angelina and Sarah. They had come north from South Carolina, where they had had a chance to see the evils of slavery firsthand. The sisters pioneered the fight for woman's right to speak in public and prepared the way for other famous women antislavery orators, such as Lucy Stone, Lucretia Mott, and Susan Anthony.

In 1856 the Anti-Slavery Society persuaded Miss Anthony to direct a number of speaking tours throughout New York state. Lucy


14 Flexner, p. 44.
Stone, who in 1848 began her long public speaking career with a lecture on woman's rights in her brother's church, was asked to stump the New England districts speaking for emancipation. Few women equalled her ability to carry on amid hocts, jeers, and even riotous assault.

It was a common thing for her to face a rain of spitballs as soon as she stepped before an audience. Once a hymnbook was flung at her head with such force it almost stunned her. On another night, in midwinter, icy water was trained on her from a hose thrust through a window. Lucy calmly reached for her shawl, wrapped it around her shoulders, and went on talking. 15

Lucretia Mott, who had already established a name in Quaker circles for her intellect and independence, played an important role in founding the first woman's antislavery association, the Philadelphia Female Anti-Slavery Society. When the World Anti-Slavery Convention met in London in 1840, Lucretia attended as a representative of her association. Convention officials would not allow women delegates to join the main group or participate in the discussion. Indignant over this treatment, Mrs. Mott afterward met with Elizabeth Cady Stanton (who was attending the convention with her husband) to decide on some type of retaliation. Eight years later the women made good their threat by founding the woman's rights movement.

Participation in democratic-humanitarian movements prior to the Civil War gave women valuable experience. As temperance and abolition crusaders they first won the right to speak in public. The numerous auxiliary societies they formed to aid the efforts of

the Anti-Slavery Society taught them lessons in business organization and propaganda. When they began to develop a philosophy of their place in society, women would call upon this training and experience to create their own reform movement—woman suffrage.

**Woman's Rights Ferment**

The woman's rights movement was not an isolated incident in American history, but rather a climax to the American woman's involvement in and reaction to the democratic-humanitarian spirit of the times. Talk of social and economic equality for the common man and political freedom for the Negro could not help awakening women to their own state of dependence in society. The result was that, at the same time women worked for the cause of others, they became increasingly interested in their own.

The place of New York state in the woman's rights movement is significant. In his history of suffrage in the United States Kirk Porter referred to New York as the real battlefield of woman suffrage. Most of the conventions were held in this state and from within its borders issued the main stream of propaganda. Added Porter, "For some unaccountable reason most of the strong-minded women of the country seem to have lived in that state." 16

Those women who had been most active in other democratic-humanitarian efforts led the woman's rights movement. Susan Anthony and Elizabeth Stanton were the central figures in the movement before

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1860. Katherine Anthony writes of their friendship and teamwork that "She became Mrs. Stanton's legs and Mrs. Stanton became her pen. Mrs. Stanton wrote Susan's ideas into speeches, and Susan went to the front and delivered them."17

The year 1848 marked the birth of the woman's rights movement. At the World Anti-Slavery Convention in London in 1840 Mrs. Stanton and Lucretia Mott had first discussed the possibility of a woman's rights convention, but they did not act until 1848, when they held their first meeting in a Seneca Falls, New York, church. The subject of discussion was "the social, civil, and religious condition and rights of women."18

The women chose the Declaration of Independence as a guide in writing their own Declaration of Principles. To their Declaration they attached a set of resolutions, one of which set the theme for woman's rights efforts thereafter. "Resolved that it is the duty of the women of this country to secure for themselves their sacred right to the elective franchise."19

The first national woman's rights convention met at Worcester in 1850. More than a thousand men and women from eleven states attended. In the audience were some of the leading reformers and liberal minds of the country. The abolitionists and temperance people came, as did two Negroes, the Hicksite Quakers, the Boston Channings, Wendell Phillips, an Alcott, and Ralph Waldo Emerson.20

17 Anthony, p. 118.
18 Tyler, p. 453.
19 Burnett, p. 64.
With each passing year the principles and ideas of woman’s rights took on more form and unity. Soon a regular philosophy of woman’s rights evolved. The call to the national convention of 1854, for example, invited:

... all who believed in fair day's wages for fair day's work; in equal right of children in the community to all public education; in the right of human beings to determine their own sphere of action; ... and all who believed in the right of adult Americans to have a voice in directing the government whose laws they must obey. 21

Lack of effective weapons hindered women most in their campaign. Without the vote they had no way to secure reform legislation. As an alternative, they began to petition state legislatures. From 1854 to 1860 Susan Anthony and Mrs. Stanton worked tirelessly bringing pressure to bear in the New York legislature. Their objective was the amendment of the woman's property rights bill of 1848.

With a handpicked force of sixty women, one from every county, Miss Anthony canvassed New York in 1854 for petition signatures. Armed with the petitions, Mrs. Stanton appeared before the Joint Judiciary Committee. The bill failed to pass that year, but in 1860 Mrs. Stanton's speech and Susan's patient toil met with success. The legislature passed an amendment which provided that a married woman could (1) control her own earnings, (2) sue and be sued, (3) make contracts and go into business, and (4) have joint guardianship of her children with her husband. 22

The student today cannot really appreciate the American woman's crusade for equal social, economic, and political rights. The whole

21 McMaster, VIII, 120.
22 Anthony, p. 146.
absorption of women in the democratic-humanitarian spirit of the pre-
Civil War period will seem a kind of tilting at windmills unless one
puts women's activity in its proper historical context. One of the
studies on woman suffrage in the United States put it this way:

... these women were a small minority starting out to
upset the established law and custom of a settled, not
to say hidebound, portion of the United States. They
were agitating chiefly in New England, New York and
Pennsylvania. They were attacking property laws, which
were sacred then as now. They were demanding the ex-
tension of education, which costs money. In a society
which prided itself on conforming to scriptural models,
they were challenging the rule of biblical beliefs in-
ssofar as they referred to the proper place of woman. 23

By 1860, however, women had made a dent in tradition. They had
made men aware of them as a social force; they had earned the respect
of many reformers through their tireless and enthusiastic support of
reform movements; and they were ready to assume a dominant role in
Civil War relief work.

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23 National American Woman Suffrage Association, p. 42.
PART II

NATURE OF RELIEF WORK OF WOMEN
OF NEW YORK CITY
CHAPTER III
NEW YORK SETTING

New York City in 1861

In 1861 New York City was busy adjusting economically, socially, and politically to the new ways and demands of the modern industrial world. A national and international market, the center of experiments in steam navigation, a fast-growing banking and insurance world, the melting pot of Old World intellectuals and labor elements, the home of a philanthropic merchant class--this was New York City.

Geographic location contributed to the rise of the port of New York. A magnificent harbor linked New York to the fresh water of the Hudson River and the quiet waters of the Sound. The Hudson was a road into the northern interior, and the Erie Canal reached westward to tie New York to the Great Lakes.

The size and nature of New York's population added to her position as a cultural and intellectual center. In 1820 the city's population had been 123,706. By 1861 this figure had increased to nearly 800,000. Immigration was largely responsible for this rapid growth. As wave after wave of immigrants landed, many settled in the city rather than move westward. The assimilation of these foreign elements into the populace broadened New York's social environment and gave it its cosmopolitan quality. Prominent intellectuals from all over the world were also attracted to New York, and many who came as visitors remained to live there.

As industry and population grew, real estate became big business in New York. By 1860 wharves and piers occupied more and more of the Manhattan shoreline, and realtors began to recognize the potential of the "wildernesses" of the early 1800's. Columbia University trustees, aware of the urban trend, moved the campus farther out to Forty-ninth Street. City officials, already interested in urban renewal, drew up plans for a city park which would stretch from Fifty-ninth Street to 110th Street and would cover an area occupied by five thousand squatters living in anything from "barns, stables, piggeries and bone factories" to dilapidated farm houses.25

The projects of merchant philanthropists were in evidence in New York by 1861. Wealthy businessmen had built three cultural centers--Cooper Union, the Academy of Music, and Astor Library--which opened to the public in 1854. These institutions afforded cultivated New Yorkers the opportunity to attend lectures, listen to opera, or borrow books.

In the political sphere the Democratic party dominated. George Opdyke won the election for mayor in 1861, defeating the Copperhead faction led by former mayor Fernando Wood. The same year construction began on the County Court House in City Hall Park. Because the Tweed Ring reaped an estimated eight million dollars in graft from this project, the building became better known as the Tweed Court House.

New Yorkers' Reaction to War

When it received the news of war, New York responded patriotically. Flags floated from every public building, and merchants dis-
played patriotic emblems on the front of their shops. Women created the Union bonnet, a hat composed of alternate layers of red, white, and blue material with streamers of red ribbon.

The first militia group to organize in New York City, the Seventh Regiment, was also the best known, probably because most of its members were the sons of wealthy and aristocratic families. On April 19 the 1,050 men of the Seventh and their commander, Colonel Marshall Lefferts, left for Washington amid much celebration and ceremony.

On April 20, 1861, a quarter of a million people gathered in Union Square to demonstrate their support of President Lincoln's call to arms. They constituted the largest mass demonstration ever staged in the city up to that time.

An outgrowth of this mass meeting was the Union Defense Committee, which was formally organized on April 22, 1861. Under the leadership of John A. Dix and later Hamilton Fish, the Committee raised over a million dollars for the war effort. In addition it organized and drilled volunteer troops. By the end of 1861 it had put sixty-six New York regiments in the field. The Committee's careless management of its finances created much scandal and led to its dissolution in 1862. But before it ceased to function, it contributed a vast sum of money for the care of widows and orphans of New York volunteers.

26 Dix was a veteran politician (U.S. Senator from 1845 to 1849 and Buchanan's Secretary of the Treasury early in 1861) and staunch Democrat who was named commander of the Department of the East by the War Department in July, 1863.

27 Whig governor of New York from 1849 to 1850 and U.S. Senator from 1851 to 1857, Fish served as a Federal commissioner for the relief of prisoners during the war and later as Grant's Secretary of State.

28 Hammond, p. 30.
This then was New York in 1861—prosperous, philanthropic, and patriotic. What its women were doing in 1861 and throughout the course of the Civil War is the subject of the following chapters.
CHAPTER IV

ORGANIZATION OF WOMEN'S CENTRAL ASSOCIATION OF RELIEF

Nature of Women's Aid Societies

A war fought in what has been called the "housewife's front yard" could not very well be ignored by women. Thus, when they turned away from the railroad station where they had just seen their husbands or sons off to war, they were not content to return home and do nothing but wait. No proclamation summoned the women of the North to their relief work. They merely sat down in their parlors, churches, or town halls and began to pack food, pick lint, and sew bandages for the men in camp. Their work would end in the greatest organized relief effort known to that time and would establish a pattern of war relief for future generations to follow.

Lincoln called up the states' militia on April 15, 1861. That very day the women of Bridgeport, Connecticut, organized the first ladies' aid society. The women agreed to meet every day to sew for their boys, to consider means of providing them with food, clothing, and books, to channel communication between the front and the home town, and to keep a record of each volunteer who left their area. By the time the war ended, about ten thousand such societies flour-

29 Lint was used during the Civil War as a dressing for wounds. Women made lint by scraping pieces of linen and forming the fine ravelings into a soft, fleecy substance. Some ladies' groups used machines to scrape the linen and form the lint.

ished throughout the North. Purely local and short-range in their aims at first, these groups did not think beyond the needs of their husbands, sons, or neighbors.

Origin of Relief Societies in New York City

Wealthy or upper middle class women largely supported and directed relief work in New York City. They had both time and money to give to the care and comfort of enlisted sons and brothers. Women who had gained prominence in a profession or through work in a reform movement were also very active in relief efforts.

Society leaders may have directed and organized relief work, but from the outset the average housewife or working woman was equally interested in doing her share. One woman, who referred to herself as "Nightingale," wrote the editor of the New York Daily Times asking "What can Women Do?"

I am but a woman, and, during these war times . . . should be satisfied to stay at home, and take care of the babies. But still, is there nothing for a woman to do--is there nothing she can do more than this? . . . cannot some of us volunteer--not to shoulder a musket--but to nurse the sick, bind up the wounded, and render all those little attentions and mercies which a woman loves to do? Please call attention to us, and we will respond. 32

One of the first aid societies in New York City was a group of Fourteenth Street ladies who met on April 22, 1861. The women organized to show their support of the Union cause and to contribute to the aid and comfort of local troops. An article in the Times noted the women had chosen to supply the needs of the Second Regiment. 33

32 Times, April 22, 1861, p. 2, col. 4.
33 Times, April 27, 1861, p. 2, col. 3.
As women banded together in their efforts, societies and associations of aid and relief sprang up in every part of New York City. One attempt to unify these widespread activities was publicized in the *Times* under the title, "Work for the Ladies." There were thousands of women in the city eager to contribute aid, said the article, but something should be done at once to organize their efforts. Perhaps, it was suggested, small groups of women from churches or city wards could form larger associations to prepare bandages and other necessary articles.

The article stated that nursing activity also needed organization. Scores of women were ready to serve as nurses, but a central, authorized group to make arrangements with hospitals in Washington and money to defray nurses' expenses were needed. The article advised citizens to begin campaigning for funds without waiting for a formal organization of a nurses' corps.

The preparation of lint and bandages required immediate attention, but the article cautioned ladies to learn the official bandage sizes and types before they began working on this project. Women were promised financial support for their relief efforts. "There can be no reasonable doubt that funds in abundance will be promptly provided to supply material."^34^ 

Finally, the article invited anyone interested in discussing these problems to a meeting at the residence of Mrs. Raymond^35^ on Ninth Street.

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^34^ *Times*, April 22, 1861, p. 4, col. 5.

^35^ Mrs. Raymond was the wife of Henry J. Raymond, editor of the *Times*. 
Two to three hundred women attended the meeting at the Raymond home. Two local doctors were present to explain the proper method of preparing bandages. The group formed an association to supervise the purchasing of materials and the distribution of supplies to any needy regiment. 36

Two other notices of ladies' aid activities appeared in the Times during May, 1861. The Ladies' Union Association, which met daily at the Society Library, publicly acknowledged the receipt of the following donations:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Already acknowledged</th>
<th>$681.50</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mrs. Maria M. Livingston</td>
<td>10.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary Dept. of School No. 40, 18th Ward</td>
<td>6.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;A Friend&quot;</td>
<td>20.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;A Lady&quot;</td>
<td>20.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;A Little Girl&quot;</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mrs. Bacon</td>
<td>25.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>$764.25</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The ladies had used the entire amount to purchase materials and they "respectfully" solicited additional contributions. 37

The second item concerned the Ladies' Army Aid Association, which met in the Trustees' Room of the Astor Library. This group had collected fourteen boxes of goods during its two-week existence. It welcomed any donations and acknowledged the gifts of sewing machines from Wheeler & Wilson and Singer. 38

Early Supply Mistakes

The zeal of these New York aid societies, like similar women's groups elsewhere in the North, was not always matched by common sense.

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36 Times, April 23, 1861, p. 8, col. 4.
37 Times, May 3, 1861, p. 8, col. 5.
38 Times, May 19, 1861, p. 8, col. 4.
The food packages they sent soldiers were especially impractical. Baggage cars were flooded with crates and barrels containing jars of jelly, fresh eggs packed in oats, butter wrapped in damp leaves, pies, cakes, sauerkraut, and even fried chicken. Since eggs and jelly jars are very fragile, fried chicken spoils easily, and heat makes butter melt, the goods arrived at camp either broken, decayed, or leaking.  

Women also tended to forget the shape of the male torso when they made clothes for the soldiers. A U.S. Sanitary Commission official remarked, "Most of our ladies . . . have so magnified our soldiers in their hearts that the shirts and drawers they send us would fit Anakims, and when found in future ages . . . people will say, 'There were giants in those days.'" He advised women to use their husbands as patterns.

The societies' most ludicrous mistake was the headdress called a havelock, which they thought would protect their boys against the "tropical" Virginia sun. The havelock was a cap with a piece of shoulder-length white linen stitched to the back and sides. Soldiers dubbed it "the white nightcap" and draped it around their heads in every possible manner. The havelock's final fate was to be used as a cleaning rag.

These mistakes on the part of women's societies prompted the New York Medical Association to offer its assistance in directing and

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41 Young, p. 70.
channeling relief efforts. In an article in the *Times*, the Association proposed to receive and distribute supplies on behalf of ladies' aid groups. It also listed the types of medical supplies which government officials had approved for army use.42

Meeting at the New York Women's Infirmary

On April 25, 1861, just six days after Colonel Leffert's regiment had left, the first step was taken to bring together the diversified aid societies. The New York Women's Infirmary, established by the sisters Elizabeth and Emily Blackwell in 1853, was the site of this significant meeting. Dr. Elizabeth Blackwell had called together the managers of the Infirmary to discuss the need for women nurses in the war. She had not intended to open the meeting to the public, but editor Raymond of the *Times* put a notice of it in his paper.43

As a result the Infirmary was filled to capacity on April 25. The leaders of New York society--members of families such as the Roosevelts, Astors, and Schuylers--attended the meeting. Three generations of women were represented, for example, Mrs. William Cullen Bryant, Mrs. John Dix, and Louisa Lee Schuyler, great-granddaughter of Alexander Hamilton.44 Among the men in the audience were The Reverend Doctor Henry Bellows, a Unitarian minister and fluent speaker who was at his best when championing a cause or organizing

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42 *Times*, May 2, 1861, p. 5, col. 4.
43 *Times*, April 23, 1861, p. 8, col. 4.
44 Greenbie, p. 55.
a movement, and Dr. Elisha Harris, a New York physician very much interested in army sanitation.

Address to the Women of New York

At the Infirmary meeting the women drafted a newspaper release which listed certain objectives for women's war work. This address appeared in the Times of April 28, 1861. It stated that women's aid should be twofold: to supply lint, bandages, and other goods to the Army Medical Staff and to provide nursing services.

The address cautioned the reader that exact, official information about army needs was very important. It also recommended that a central committee be established to direct supply activities and to work with the official head of the Army Medical Staff. This committee could correspond with similar associations in other parts of the country and issue press releases to keep women everywhere informed. Another essential, stated the article, was a central depot in New York to which contributions from the several states could be directed.

The article noted that nursing activities also needed organization and direction. "The public mind needs much enlightenment, and the overflowing zeal and sympathy of the women of the nation, a careful channel, not only to prevent waste of time and effort, but to save embarrassment to the official staff, and to secure real efficiency in the service." It was suggested that a central agency be created to examine and place all nursing candidates.

45 Young, p. 73.

46 For complete text of address see Appendix I.

47 Times, April 28, 1861, p. 8, col. 6.
The address closed by inviting the women of New York City to a meeting on April 29 at Cooper Union to discuss a plan for organizing all New York relief societies under one head.

Numerous societies, working without concert, organization or head,—without any direct understanding with the official authorities,—without any positive instructions as to the immediate or future wants of the Army,—are liable to waste their enthusiasm in disproportionate efforts, to overlook some claims and overdo others, while they give unnecessary trouble in official quarters by the variety and irregularity of their proffers of help or their inquiries for guidance. 48

Ninety-one women—most of them prominent, many of them wealthy—had signed this address, which was the foundation of one of the most influential relief associations in New York state and the North. Agatha Young, author of The Women and the Crisis, calls the document "a milestone in the long history of philanthropic effort." 49

Founding of Women's Central Association of Relief

Two thousand women 50 met at Cooper Union on April 29. Hannibal Hamlin, Vice-President of the United States, opened the meeting. Dudley D. Field 51 presided, and speeches were made by Surgeon Crawford of Fort Sumter and such prominent men as Dr. Valentine Mott and the Reverend Doctors Parker, Hitchcock, and Bethune.

In two resolutions the women stated the purpose and structure of their new organization, the Women's Central Association of Relief.

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48 Ibid.

49 Young, p. 73.

50 Young (p. 76) cites the number as three to four thousand and Greenbie (p. 65) sets it at four thousand. The Times (April 30, 1861, p. 8, col. 1) is the source for the two thousand figure.

51 Field was a distinguished New York lawyer.
Resolved, That it is highly expedient to concentrate and methodize the spontaneous and varied efforts now making by the women of New York in behalf of the sick and wounded of the approaching campaign, the better to secure proportion, economy and efficiency in their benevolent labors.

Resolved, That to accomplish this end it is desirable to form a "Women's Central Association of Relief;" and that a Committee of three ladies and three gentlemen be appointed by the Chair, to report a plan of organization to this meeting. 52

Custom still demanded that men serve as the directors of such an organization, but women headed the three working committees—executive, registration, and finance—which administered the organization's program. Dr. Valentine Mott accepted the presidency of the Board of Managers. Mrs. Hamilton Fish directed the fund-raising efforts of the finance committee. Dr. Elizabeth Blackwell supervised the registration committee, which daily interviewed and examined nursing candidates and selected those best suited for army nursing and hospital training. Louisa Schuyler headed the executive committee, which collected supplies from the member aid societies.

The task of supply collection was especially difficult at the outset because the government believed it had enough supplies to meet any demand. Rumors of a ninety days' war tended to discourage public support, for people thought the army had "already more lint than would be needed for years."53 The executive committee's first step in organizing supply lines was to establish communication with sewing societies, churches, and communities in New York. From the office of the Women's Central in Cooper Union Miss Schuyler and her

committee "sent out circulars, wrote letters, looked out of the windows at the passing regiments, and talked about our work, sometimes hopefully, sometimes despairingly."\textsuperscript{54}

The centralization of city and state relief efforts was the primary work of the Women's Central at its inception. Its next objective would be to help create an organized nation-wide relief program.

\textsuperscript{54} Greenbie, p. 66.
CHAPTER V

ROLE OF WOMEN'S CENTRAL IN FOUNDING
U.S. SANITARY COMMISSION

Reason for Women's Interest in Sanitation

The work of the Women's Central brought it into contact with government medical units. Both its attempt to establish an official relationship with army medical personnel and increasing unofficial reports from military camps of the incompetence and inexperience of army supply and medical departments made the Women's Central anxious to find out what sanitary relief measures the government had initiated.

The Women's Central learned of the disorganized condition of army relief through its correspondence with women's groups throughout the North. The bulk of the mail Louisa Schuyler received from these societies constituted news from soldiers at the front. Local aid groups pooled their letters from local volunteers and sent them to Miss Schuyler along with their own opinions or remarks.

The Women's Central was appalled at the picture these letters presented of army supply and sanitation programs. It learned, for instance, that no provision had been made for feeding troops enroute from home to Washington. One regiment had had nothing to eat for thirty-six hours, except some coffee a Cleveland woman had brought the men when their train stopped there. Once in camp the soldier's

55 Her duties also involved those of corresponding secretary for the Women's Central.
56 Greenbie, p. 68.
diet was unsuited to the climate. Standard army rations of coffee, beans, and fat salt pork might be all right for active men in cold weather, but the climate of the South necessitated a diet of fresh vegetables and fruits.

Army clothing and equipment caused additional problems. Unscrupulous millowners profited greatly from the government's haste in purchasing uniforms. Much of the clothing they supplied for the volunteers was made of shoddy (scraps of cloth swept off a shop floor, which were pounded, rolled, glued, and smoothed to the external appearance of cloth). Soldiers' letters home told how these uniforms would disintegrate after a day's march or rainy weather. The profiteering in horses was just as bad. It seemed that every man who had an old or diseased horse brought it to army headquarters to sell to the government. 57

Finally, lack of medical inspection and quarantine allowed contagious diseases to spread through army camps. Most camps lacked facilities to handle the sick or wounded, who were literally piled in churches, office buildings, or Negro shacks. When a soldier died, his relatives usually learned the news from a comrade, for the government as yet had no adequate method of registering volunteers.

Steps Leading to Creation of U.S. Sanitary Commission

The sheer weight of evidence in the letters forwarded to the Women's Central prompted it to investigate army sanitation measures. The organization had already approached local army officials to find

57 Ibid., p. 69.
out the exact needs of the troops, but The Reverend Bellows, its representative, had not made much headway. The Medical Purveyor of the Medical Department of New York was an old-time soldier who felt civilians should not be meddling in military affairs. He flatly informed Bellows that the women's offers of aid were of no practical value to the army.  

Bellows would have given up at this point, but the women would not accept the rebuff. Instead they decided to go over the head of the Medical Purveyor to the Surgeon General's Office in Washington. This time the women did not send Bellows alone. Dr. Elisha Harris, Dr. Van Buren from the Board of the Physicians and Surgeons of New York, and Dr. Jacob Harsen, representing the Lint and Bandage Association, accompanied Bellows and gave him support.

On May 15, 1861, the delegation left for Washington. By the time they arrived the next day, their purpose had grown from obtaining authorization for women's relief efforts to creating an American Sanitary Commission. Bellows and his associates had decided that it was just as important to prevent or reduce illness and hardship among the troops as to care for those already ill or wounded. The men also felt a civilian commission could best supervise such a program, provided it had enforcement authority.

The delegation discussed their plan first with Acting Surgeon General Wood. Wood felt the government's Medical Department was

58 Maxwell, p. 2.
59 Ibid., pp. 5-6.
60 Surgeon General Lawson, who had been in the service for forty-eight years, had died May 15, 1861. Wood was filling his job until a successor could be appointed.
equal to the task and needed no outside help. However, the men persisted and finally persuaded Wood to write the Secretary of War endorsing in principle the plan for a Sanitary Commission. Wood, who hoped to succeed to the vacant post of Surgeon General, was not yet officially appointed, so actually he did not have the authority to grant anything more than his tentative approval.

Next the delegation themselves wrote to the Secretary of War. Emphasizing the fact that "the present is essentially a people's war," the men claimed that organized popular participation in relief measures was justified. The government made no provisions to sustain the soldier's health, but only to care for his sickness. A Sanitary Commission endowed with the proper authority could introduce a whole new concept in battlefield relief--preventive care.  

During the debate with government officials over the merits of this plan, Bellows sent periodic reports to the Women's Central to keep it informed of each step taken by his group. At times the men's patience wore thin because of the argument and suspicion they encountered. The President's feeling that a Sanitary Commission might prove a "fifth wheel to the coach" especially discouraged them. In her war memoirs Mary Livermore wrote that the delegation would have probably retreated before the rebuffs and hinderances "but for the zeal, intelligence and earnestness" of the women back home.

In the meantime the government appointed a new Surgeon General. Dr. Clement A. Finley had received the appointment instead of Wood.

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61 Young, pp. 78-79.
62 Maxwell, p. 8.
A sixty-four year old military man, Finley cared neither for reforms in Army medicine nor for civilian interference in Army matters. He promptly informed the Secretary of War that he could not endorse Wood's tentative approval of the plan for a Sanitary Commission. 64

The delegation kept up its pressure, however, and thereby secured a compromise satisfactory to neither side. Finley remained convinced that a Sanitary Commission was superfluous; Bellows' committee regretted the new Commission's lack of authority. The government gave the Commission merely the authority to inspect and advise. Furthermore, it allowed the Commission to work only among volunteer, not regular Army, troops. 65

On June 9, 1861, the Secretary of War issued a sanctioning order officially creating the United States Sanitary Commission. The members of the Commission elected Bellows president and George Templeton Strong treasurer. A short time later Frederick Olmsted 66 became a member of the Commission and its secretary. The plan of organization signed by the President on June 12 created two committees within the Commission, one for inquiry and one for advice. 67

Nature of Commission's Work

The United States Sanitary Commission linked the work of Northern aid societies with the government's medical program. To cement its tie with civilian efforts, the Commission established regional

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64 Young, p. 79.
65 Maxwell, p. 8.
66 Olmsted was a landscape architect, but is best known today for his books (1856 and 1861) on the pre-war South.
67 Maxwell, pp. 8-10.
headquarters throughout the North, which served as depots for the contributions of relief societies. The Women's Central office was one such supply center.

The Commission's committee of inquiry, according to an editorial in the *Times*, appraised the real conditions and wants of the troops. Commission agents gained knowledge of the soldier's needs by consulting army officers, surgeons, chaplains, and the men themselves. The Commission incorporated this information into its reports to the public and suggestions to military authorities. The *Times* claimed the Commission's recommendations were significant and valid because it treated all questions "from the highest ground, with the newest light of science, and the latest teachings of experience in the great continental wars."  

The committee of advice executed the plans or changes suggested by the committee of inquiry after it cleared them with the government and the army's medical bureau. In addition, the committee of advice attempted to secure uniformity of state and local relief activities, devised schemes of supply collection and distribution, solicited donations from state treasuries or private benefactors, and organized the haphazard contributions of the general public.

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68 *Times*, June 25, 1861, p. 4, col. 4.

69 Marjorie Greenbie (pp. 109-110) lists the following duties of the Commission agent. His main task was reporting the location of each camp, the training and qualifications not only of the surgeons, but of the captains and lieutenants, and the condition of food, water, equipment, etc. In addition he would note any evidence of profiteering in food or clothing. The agent saw that each camp received its quota of tents, equipment, clothing, food supplies, and medicine. Each week he reported to headquarters.

70 *Times*, June 25, 1861, p. 4, col. 4.

71 Ibid.
An article in the *Atlantic Monthly* of February, 1865, divided the activities of the Sanitary Commission into five major functions: prevention of suffering, Special Relief Department, Hospital Directory, assistance to stationary hospitals, and battlefield operations.

Keeping the soldier safe from illness and disease was the Commission's major task. The Special Relief Department supervised a system of homes and lodges for needy soldiers and administered the payment of back pay, pensions, and bounties. The Hospital Directory—considered by the author of the article to be the most interesting function—kept an up-to-date listing of all the sick and wounded men in regular hospitals. Between October, 1862, and July, 1864, it recorded seven hundred thousand names. The fourth function, assistance to regular hospitals, involved furnishing supplies requisitioned by hospital surgeons.

The final area of Commission work, battlefield relief, interested the public most because it evinced the tie between civilian relief effort and the soldier. The author praised the Commission's system of front-line operations. It planned and executed its activities well, and its agents were always on the field during an engagement with ambulances, supply wagons, anesthetics, and surgical instruments. 72

Mary Livermore, in *My Story of the War*, indicated the extent of the Commission's supply distribution during various military campaigns. At the battle of Antietam, for example, the articles distributed included nearly 29,000 dry goods items (such as shirts, towels, 72

and pillows), thirty barrels of lint and bandages, over 2,500 pounds of condensed milk, and 5,000 pounds of beefstock and canned meats. Distributions made at the battle of Shiloh amounted to over 11,000 shirts, 3,600 pairs of socks, and nearly 3,000 bedsacks.\footnote{Livermore, pp. 132-133.}

Scope and Significance of Commission's Work

During the war the Sanitary Commission spent nearly fifty million dollars.\footnote{Flexner, p. 107.} The supply of food alone was a major business operation, for the Commission furnished an estimated 4,500,000 meals to sick and wounded soldiers.\footnote{H. A. Bruce, Women in the Making of America (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1912), p. 192.} Actually the Commission became involved in almost every phase of war activity except matters of military strategy and actual combat.

It must not be forgotten that the heart of the Sanitary Commission was women's societies. Some seven thousand women's groups throughout the North and West became voluntary subsidiaries of the Commission.\footnote{Flexner, p. 107.} Women like Mary Livermore of Chicago and Louisa Schuyler of New York worked closely with Bellows and secretary Olmsted. In essence the Commission was the great national channel through which women worked with the government in caring for the soldier.\footnote{Bruce, p. 190.}

Allan Nevins summarized the significance of the Sanitary Commission by describing it as "the forerunner, and to some extent the
parent, of the American Red Cross. Its influence for the betterment of hospitals, nursing, and medical and surgical practice was felt long after the war ended."\textsuperscript{78}

\textsuperscript{78} Maxwell, p. viii.
CHAPTER VI

FUNCTION OF WOMEN'S CENTRAL AS SUPPLY DEPOT

Regional Scope of Its Administration

One of the first acts of the U.S. Sanitary Commission was to establish regional headquarters in the large cities of the North to which women's groups could send their contributions and from which supplies could be distributed. This act transformed local, independent effort into a vast national network of supply. The Women's Central voluntarily became a branch of the Commission and served from the first as a major supply depot.

Since one of the original purposes of the Women's Central had been to unite the aid groups of New York City and the surrounding area, it was already familiar with the problems of large-scale supply administration. Some indication of the geographical extent of its responsibility was given by an article in the *Times* listing some of the groups forwarding supplies to the Women's Central.

Troy, New York
Ladies of Bainbridge, Chenango County, N. Y.
Ladies of St. Peter's Church, Westchester
Northampton, N. Y.
Ladies of Oyster Bay, N. Y.
All Soul's Church
Seneca County
Union Defence Committee
Washington Street, Boston
Ladies' Relief Association, Orange, New Jersey
Newport, Rhode Island
Ladies of First Congregational Church, New London, Conn.

Appeals for Supplies

The Women's Central had a hard time maintaining a steady flow of supplies. Immediately following a battle great quantities of clothing and material poured into headquarters, but during the lull between battles supplies dwindled to a trickle.

Aid societies contributed most of the supplies, but individuals donated also. Mrs. Charles P. Daly brought many items to the Women's Central office. Her diary contains several references to her collection of old shirts, sheets, towels, and linens, which she mended and cleaned before donating. In an entry of May 18, 1862, Mrs. Daly reported, "I've collected together some 40 shirts, and some dozen sheets, vests, drawers, quilts, etc." 81

A few days before the battle of Bull Run (July 21, 1861) the Women's Central asked the Times to issue an appeal to the women of New York to increase their collection efforts. The editorial, entitled "Patriotic Work for Women," urged women to help supply the imperative wants of the army "without a day's delay." The article was directed especially to "thousands of true women in the palaces of wealth and luxury in this city, literally dying of idleness."

80 Mrs. Daly is not so important here for her philanthropy as for her account of life in New York City during the war. A portion of her diary, which she began in 1861 when she was thirty-seven years old, has been edited by Harold Hammond and published in 1962 under the title Diary of a Union Lady 1861-1865. The daughter of a wealthy and socially prominent Dutch family, Maria Lydig Daly was the wife of Charles P. Daly, a son of Irish immigrants who had become a justice of the Court of Common Pleas in New York. Mrs. Daly and her husband were firm Democrats and ardent Unionists. Her diary is significant because she commented on various aspects of the Civil War as seen from New York and on many of women's activities in New York City.

81 Hammond, p. 132.
Their contributions should not be sporadic in nature, but should constitute a steady and constant stream. In closing the editorial advised, "What thou doest, however, do quickly." 82

In addition to publicizing the work of the Women's Central and its need for supplies, the Times and other New York newspapers collected money from their staffs for the organization. For example, the Women's Central acknowledged the following donations for the weeks ending June 8, 1861, and June 15, 1861: from the Courier and Enquirer, $38.75; Evening Post, $6.96; New York Sun, $15.75; World, $47.40; and Tribune, $42.96. 83

To sustain an even flow of goods the Women's Central asked its auxiliaries to send a monthly box of supplies. This routine helped systematize the collection efforts of the sub-societies and at the same time gave the Women's Central a constant, dependable source of supply. The New York group also encouraged the "federal principle" of supply distribution, whereby supplies were passed on to any northern troop that needed them, not just to one's relatives or certain favored regiments. 84

The Women's Central sponsored a total of 369 lectures at Cooper Union on the subject of the Sanitary Commission. 85 George Templeton Strong, a prominent New Yorker and treasurer of the Sanitary Commission, mentioned one of these lectures (held on December 11, 1862) in his diary. Mayor Opdyke presided and The Reverend Bellows spoke.

82 Times, July 17, 1861, p. 4, col. 5.
83 Times, June 17, 1861, p. 8, col. 2.
84 Brockett, p. 531.
85 Ibid., p. 532.
Bellows outlined the purposes and methods of the Sanitary Commission and stressed the Commission's relation to government on the one hand and popular effort on the other. Strong's final comment about the meeting was that it had been more successful than he had expected. 86

Administrative Innovations

As the work of the Women's Central expanded during the war years, the formal structure and operation of the organization was enlarged and adapted. In February, 1863, for instance, the Women's Central adopted the plan of "Associate Managers." This plan involved the division of the territory administered by the Women's Central into sections headed by associate managers. The manager directed the work of each aid society in her section. In addition, she forwarded to the central correspondence committee every month an official report on the activity of her section. 87

In the spring of 1863, when Grant was preparing for the siege of Vicksburg, the Women's Central took a big step toward solving its supply problem. Lack of clothing and foodstuffs had continually hindered the work of the organization and its societies. Retail prices had gone up considerably, with the result that subordinate aid societies were able to purchase fewer materials. In an attempt to solve this problem, the Women's Central took over the purchasing responsibility for all its aid societies. By buying in large quantities, it could get material at wholesale prices, which the local aid societies could afford. 88

87 Brockett, p. 532.
88 Ibid., p. 533.
Prices of goods maintained a steady upward rise, however, and soon the purchasing scheme had to be revised. This time the Women's Central proposed to double the amount of any sum (not exceeding thirty dollars per month) raised by the aid societies toward the purchase of goods. Any society, then, which sent in twenty dollars received forty dollars worth of goods in return. So successful was this new scheme that the Purchasing Committee had to get a new set of books and hire a salaried accountant. The Sanitary Commission agreed to defray the cost of this added expense, which L. P. Brockett, author of *Woman's Work in the Civil War*, claimed amounted to over five thousand dollars every month. 89

Financing the Sanitary Commission

The Sanitary Commission had been established under the authority, but not at the expense, of the government. Since the Commission's work was of "big business" proportions, its expenses ran into large figures. The difficult task of financing such a project was another responsibility of women's groups.

By the end of 1863 the financial resources of the Sanitary Commission had dipped dangerously low. An active military year (such battles as Vicksburg, Chancellorsville, Gettysburg, and Chattanooga) had taken its toll, and if the course of war in 1864 followed the same pattern, the Commission needed additional funds immediately. Thus women's societies had to find a lot of money fast. They answered the challenge with the great Sanitary fairs.

89 Ibid., p. 535.
The idea of a fund-raising fair originated in Chicago, where the women raised seventy-five thousand dollars. Cincinnati women staged the second northern fair, and it netted over two hundred thousand dollars for the Sanitary Commission. In both cities women spent months planning and organizing the multitudinous details of the fair. Hundreds of committees solicited business support and participation. According to L. P. Brockett, the planning of these fairs was equalled only by their success.

The Brooklyn Fair

Within the city of New York, the women held two fairs for the Sanitary Commission. The ladies of Brooklyn made news first with their fair, which was fourth in the series of northern Sanitary fairs and opened on March 22, 1864. The fair site was the Academy of Music, around which temporary buildings were erected to house the many display booths and exhibits. Lumbermen donated the wood for these buildings and carpenters contributed their free labor. The Brooklyn fair netted nearly a quarter of a million dollars for the Sanitary Commission.

Probably the most interesting feature of the Brooklyn fair was its "New England kitchen." The kitchen represented early New England, and fair officials had erected it to acquaint with the real thing children and others whose knowledge of "the old days" was incomplete. Furnishings included an authentic eighteenth century fire-

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90 Hammond, p. 279. The Times (January 1, 1864, p. 5, col. 2) states the Chicago figure as $60,000.

91 Brockett, p. 59.

92 Times, February 7, 1864, p. 4, col. 5.
place and a Bible, almanac, chairs and tables, candlesticks, and
dishes. Waitresses dressed in the costumes of their great-grand-
mothers served visitors samples of the old style cooking, includ-
ing such favorites as pumpkin pie, Indian bread and Indian pudding,
and doughnuts. Common incidents in the life of eighteenth century
New England, such as the apple-paring, donation party, and quilting
frolic, were also enacted for visitors.  

The Metropolitan Fair

One of the first notices in the Times concerning the second
New York fair, the Metropolitan Fair, stated that this particular
fair aimed for something higher than the ordinary meaning of the
term. Every branch of agriculture, trade, and industry would con-
tribute its finest products for exhibition and sale. Farmers from
New York and adjoining states would show choice livestock; factories
would display locomotives, grand pianos, sewing machines, and steam
plows. The article noted that the fair's managers were interested
in exhibits or donations of a cultural nature for display in the
"Museum of Paintings, Statuary, Ancient Furniture, Autographs, Arti-
cles of Vertu, [sic] and Curiosities."  

To create more enthusiasm and competition in planning and man-
aging the fair, two committees--one of women and the other of men--
were appointed. The officers of the Ladies' Executive Committee in-
cluded Mrs. Hamilton Fish, president; Mrs. David Lane, vice-president;
Mrs. John Sherwood, secretary; and Mrs. George Templeton Strong,
treasurer. The Reverend Bellows headed the men's committee of Dr. William Van Buren, Dr. C. R. Agnew, Dr. Wolcott Gibbs, and George Templeton Strong.95

The success achieved by the other fairs spurred the work of the two committees. They intended to create a fair whose profits would exceed all former records. As the Times said, if Chicago could raise $60,000 and Boston, $140,000, and if Cincinnati could contemplate equal success, then New York and the "wealthy region of which it is the center" could certainly do more than these three cities singly or even together.96

The two committees set March 28, 1864, as the tentative date of the fair. The main fair building was constructed on Fourteenth Street. It contained numerous exposition booths and even an art gallery, a restaurant, and a bookstore. Another building erected in Union Square displayed children's things and international products.97 Fair officials also made provision for an animal show a block away from the central fair grounds.98

New Yorkers had never witnessed such a variety of exhibits as this fair promised. Merchants, patriotic citizens, and even friends abroad eagerly donated the items for sale. Milliners, tailors, grocers, actors, brokers--people from all walks of life were represented at the fair by their work or products. Committees from various reli-

95 Ibid.
96 Ibid.
97 See Appendix II for plans of the two buildings.
98 Hammond, p. 279.
igious organizations offered their services. Newspapers volunteered to print advertisements at no cost; express companies offered to ship all goods free of charge; and many concerns provided free storage space in their buildings.

The question of a raffle posed a problem, however, for the managers of the fair. A state statute against raffling existed, but city government officials had decided to permit raffling because the profits would be used for a charitable concern. This decision caused a good deal of debate and sharp criticism of the fair itself. As a result, representatives of the Sanitary Commission asked fair officials to abandon the raffling project.

The Times offered this appraisal of the situation. It felt the fair managers had acted unwisely in supporting raffling "in view of the evil tendency of the example upon the undiscriminating," but it refused to accept any repudiation of the fair for this reason. The threat of many clergymen to withdraw their support of the fair solely on the basis of this raffling issue was rash and unjustified. One error on the part of a committee should not discredit the entire fair project and the fine idea behind it. The paper termed the Sanitary Commission's stand on the question "simple concession to a well meant but narrow and unfounded clamor."

One month before Grant's Wilderness Campaign the fair opened. April 14, 1864, was a memorable day in the history of the city and

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99 Times, January 6, 1864, p. 4, col. 4.
100 Times, January 23, 1864, p. 4, col. 4; Times, February 24, 1864, p. 4, col. 2.
101 March 28 had been the tentative date, but the opening was delayed until the following week. Sources give no reason for this change.
state. Only a week before someone had suggested that this day be made a holiday. City officials had agreed and quickly authorized the proposal. Public offices remained closed all day, and general business ceased at noon.

Speeches, bands, and all the fanfare that accompanies so gala an affair marked this day. Flags waved from every building; even the boats in New York harbor were gaily decked for the occasion. To City Hall Park, the center of all the activity, came thousands of excited people on the heels of a huge military parade composed largely of regular troops from New York City. The *Times* estimated that over 10,000 men marched in line to the music of twenty-seven bands.\(^{102}\)

*Harper's Weekly* claimed the procession included 8,000 infantry, with 2,000 cavalry and artillery.\(^{103}\)

Among the innumerable concessions and exhibits at the fair were several with very interesting or unusual features. A display with a Roman theme opened April 11. It featured many ancient and valuable articles connected with the Roman Empire. Supposedly the display included the most valuable and extensive collection of curiosities from the Holy Land ever seen in America.\(^ {104}\)

The *Times* complimented the Methodist Church on its booth's tasteful display and design. A "bevy of the prettiest young ladies imaginable" attended the booth and sold dolls, pictures, afghans, and other ladies' work which had been donated. A striking feature

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\(^{102}\) *Times*, April 5, 1864, p. 1, col. 5.


\(^{104}\) *Times*, April 12, 1864, p. 4, col. 5.
of the booth was a very effective scene symbolizing the Angel of Night.  

The Hats, Caps, and Furs exhibit contained many unusual items, such as an Indian hammock decorated with bird feathers of numerous species, a set of Russian sable valued at one thousand dollars, and a lion pup "but a few hours old and only eight inches high." Another special attraction was an Indian wigwam erected by the artist Bierstadt. Visitors crowded to see the Indian craft and art sold in the wigwam and the Indian war dancers who entertained daily.

The "Knickerbocker Kitchen" added a quaint touch to the Metropolitan Fair. Prominent New York women dressed in colonial costume sold everything from foodstuffs to trinkets at this booth. The booth's managers asked Mrs. Daly to participate in the project because of her Dutch heritage, but she refused. She stated in her diary that she "did not particularly fancy the idea of being seated in cap, short gown, and petticoats, pouring out tea for all the rabble that would come to give their mite to the Sanitary Commission. They would be gratifying their curiosity, and I would be part of the show."

Mrs. Daly refused a second offer to model at the fair, this time as the character Katrina Van Tassel from Washington Irving's Legend of Sleepy Hollow. One of the women's groups sponsored a

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105 Times, April 12, 1864, p. 4, col. 5.
106 Ibid.
108 Hammond, p. 280.
booth which featured the works of this New York author. They reproduced a scene from one of Irving's stories and asked Mrs. Daly to complete the picture by posing as the village maid. Mrs. Daly reasoned that, "As Katrina Van Tassel is represented as a blooming girl of 18, and I am more than double that age, I think it the part of modesty and patriotism to decline." 109

The "sword test" held in the Arms and Trophy booth caused the most excitement and raised the most money. Its purpose was to determine the most popular general in the Union army. People could vote for their favorite general by paying one dollar. The general with the largest number of votes received the sword. A feeling of tension pervaded the atmosphere of this contest, as "men of fashion and reputation crowded, ostensibly to learn how the vote was going." 110

The wives of the two major contenders, General Grant and General McClellan, represented their husbands at the contest. Both manifested much interest in the balloting and personally greeted each voter. Mrs. Grant was on hand each day to accept votes for her husband. However, the "vivacity, personal charm, and courteous flattery" of the younger Mrs. McClellan seemed to give her an edge with the voters. 111

The polls closed at midnight on the last day of the fair, and excitement ran high as the hour approached. At just ten minutes before twelve McClellan was far out in front of the race. Five minutes later the Union League of Philadelphia telegraphed five hundred votes

109 Ibid., p. 282.
110 Dannett, p. 276.
111 Ibid.
for Grant, and he won the sword. Although this project aroused a
good deal of political controversy and left Mrs. McClellan "pitifully
disappointed," the money it made added substantially to the Sanitary
Commission's fund. 112

The Metropolitan Fair was not without its casualties. Two mem-
bers of the Ladies Executive Committee, Mrs. David Dudley Field and
Mrs. Caroline Kirkland, 113 collapsed while working at the fair and
died shortly after. The New York papers claimed they had sacrificed
their lives to the cause through overwork. Mrs. Daly believed this
to be the case also, for she remarked in connection with the death
of Mrs. Field, "This Fair has probably killed her, as it did poor
Mrs. Kirkland." 114

The New York Metropolitan Fair continued for most of the month
of April and closed as a complete success. The attendance had been
greater than the most optimistic had predicted. More important,
total admissions and contributions had netted over a million dollars
for the Sanitary Commission. 115 The sum earned by all the big fairs
reached the amazing total of nearly three million dollars, but the
individual contribution from New York dwarfed the proceeds from any
other single fair. The Times had been right when it promised, "New

112 Ibid., p. 277.

113 Mrs. Kirkland was the widow of Professor William Kirkland of
Hamilton College.

114 Hammond, p. 293.

115 An example of the fair's daily financial return is the re-
cceipts of April 11. Total receipts up to 3 o'clock were $42,917.47.
This figure involved sales of $12,468.13, admission receipts of
$9,878.54, and donations of $20,570.80. (Cited in Times, April 12,
1864, p. 4, col. 5.)
York never does anything by halves, but she will do the Fair in a style that will astonish the natives.\textsuperscript{116}

\textbf{Extent of Supply Efforts of Women's Central}

The Sanitary fair—large-scale operation that it was—was only one aspect of the activity of the Women's Central on behalf of the Sanitary Commission. The Women's Central was the largest supply branch of the Commission. In the first few months of its existence, from May to November, 1861, it sent Commission headquarters in Washington almost eight thousand shirts and about two thousand sheets.\textsuperscript{117}

During the year 1863 alone its supply committee received, packed, and distributed nearly half a million articles. If one studies the records for just one item—shirts, for example—he will note that from May 1, 1861, to July 7, 1865, the number of shirts supplied to the Sanitary Commission totaled almost three hundred thousand.\textsuperscript{118}

Louisa Lee Schuyler, head of the supply committee and corresponding secretary, officially closed the office of the Women's Central on August 12, 1865. She had waited to see "the last cover put on the last box, the little flags taken down, and lastly the window curtains removed."\textsuperscript{119} Over a period of four years she had established a nation-wide network of correspondence with other aid societies, directed the collection of supplies from the New York

\textsuperscript{116} Times, April 5, 1864, p. 4, col. 4.

\textsuperscript{117} Maxwell, p. 82.

\textsuperscript{118} Brockett, p. 537.

\textsuperscript{119} Maxwell, p. 288.
region, and supervised the packing and distribution of these goods for the Sanitary Commission. And she had done it all for only $61,386.57 (not including the wholesale purchasing of materials for societies).  

Agatha Young sums it up well when she says, "The pretty ladies of 1861, sitting in their parlors stitching the ridiculous havelocks and scraping lint, had ended by startling the world."  

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120 Brockett, p. 537.

121 Young, p. 312.
CHAPTER VII
NURSING ACTIVITY

Work in City Hospitals

The Women's Central Association of Relief and its subordinate societies represented women's organized approach to the problems of war relief. The work of collecting and distributing supplies for the troops demanded unified effort and a central administration. Nursing, on the other hand, was a type of relief activity in which women could participate individually, especially in the large city hospitals of the North. In New York City committees of ladies made regular weekly visits to the hospitals. They distributed small gifts or special items of food to the wounded soldiers and wrote letters to friends or relatives for the men.

One example of women's hospital work was Mrs. Henry Baylis, wife of a New York merchant. Mrs. Baylis took the position of Chief Directress of the Women's Relief Hospital at Yorktown. So intense was her study of the medical profession and so thorough her preparation for nursing that Frank Moore claimed she was qualified to doctor with the best of the profession. Said Moore in his tribute to Mrs. Baylis, "the memory of such a woman should be cherished by the whole nation, and she is richly entitled to a fame equal to that which Florence Nightingale has so justly earned." 122

Mrs. Daly, who tended to remain aloof from organized relief activities, seemed to enjoy visiting and nursing wounded soldiers at the Park Barracks and the City Hospital in New York. She referred often enough to these visits to indicate that they were a routine part of her weekly activity. Selected incidents from her diary help characterize the charitable activity of the upper class New York woman.

On one of Mrs. Daly's trips to the Park Barracks she helped feed some of the wounded and washed others' faces. Her younger sister accompanied her on this occasion, and Mrs. Daly noted that the girl's attractiveness seemed to cheer the men more than any of the older women's ministrations. "Oh, the magic power of youth and beauty!"\(^{123}\)

In another diary entry Mrs. Daly complained that representatives of the Women's Central, who were in charge of the wards on various days, did not appreciate other women's interference in nursing affairs. Because the soldiers enjoyed the attention, Mrs. Daly remained and distributed some of her husband's old shirts and new canes she had bought. One soldier craved a chicken leg, so Mrs. Daly sent out for some. His reaction prompted her to remark, "I never had so much pleasure before in spending fifty cents."\(^{124}\)

Mrs. Daly's devotion to this work was not so great that she neglected her own well-being. On one occasion she declined a request to read to the sick at City Hospital because she had heard some of

\(^{123}\) Hammond, p. 129.

\(^{124}\) Ibid., p. 130.
the wards contained typhoid fever patients. Said Mrs. Daly, "Find-
ing that I should have to go among the typhoid fever patients . . .
I gave up my charitable intention." 125

She was also not above ridiculing the approach of some society
matrons to hospital duty or pointing out the superfluous nature of
certain nursing activities. About Mrs. George Templeton Strong's
hospital visits, Mrs. Daly reported, "They say very kindly and char-
itably that Mrs. George Strong went down with rouge pot, crinoline,
and maid to attend to the wounded." 126 In another diary entry Mrs.
Daly mentioned a case of women's overly solicitous ministrations to
the wounded. A young lady asked a soldier if he would like to have
his face washed. "If it will give you any satisfaction to do so,
madam," was his answer, "but it has been washed four times already
this morning." 127

Many women such as Mrs. Daly did not care to participate in war
relief outside the boundaries of New York City. They had their hus-
bands or family at home with them, and they contented themselves
with weekly visits to the city hospitals. Other local workers were
not so content. They yearned to be at the front, but were kept from
going by family ties or finances. L. P. Brockett, very much aware
of the contribution of these anonymous upholders of the home front,
dedicated his book Woman's Work in the Civil War to them.

To the loyal women of America, whose patriotic contri-
butions, toils and sacrifices, enabled their sisters, 

125 Ibid., p. 132.
126 Ibid., p. 134.
127 Ibid., p. 132.
whose history is here recorded, to minister relief and consolation to our wounded and suffering heroes. 128

Recruiting and Training Military Nurses

Although the risks were great and the work demanding, military nursing attracted many women. The principal volunteers were those who were not tied to their homes, such as widows, unmarried women, or nuns. Not all the women who volunteered were accepted, for officials selected only those best suited for the rigors and perils of military nursing.

The whole question of women nurses arose after Sumter. Dorothea Dix immediately offered her services to the government and was appointed supervisor of the volunteer nursing program. However, the nurses themselves did not receive official recognition until August, 1861, when Congress passed a law governing their status and pay.

And be it further enacted, That in general or permanent hospitals, female nurses may be substituted for soldiers, when in the opinion of the surgeon general or medical officer in charge it is expedient to do so; the number of female nurses to be indicated by the surgeon general or surgeon in charge of the hospital. The nurses so employed to receive forty cents a day and one ration in kind or by commutation, in lieu of all emoluments except transportation in kind. 129

One of Miss Dix's first acts was to ask Elizabeth Blackwell to recruit and train one hundred army nurses. Her letter reached Dr. Blackwell at the time the latter was sending out invitations to the Infirmary meeting of April 25 (1861). Dr. Blackwell felt that cooperation between army doctors and nurses would be better if male

128 Brockett, p. 19.
129 Alcott, p. xxvii.
physicians trained the nurses. Therefore, she approached the physi-
cians at Bellevue Hospital with the following proposal. Her commit-
tee would screen nursing candidates and send its selections to the
doctors to be trained. The physicians responded by organizing two
associations to work with Dr. Blackwell's committee—the Advisory
Committee of the Board of Physicians and Surgeons of the Hospitals
of New York and the New York Medical Association for Furnishing
Hospital Supplies in Aid of the Army. 130

Dr. Blackwell's recruiting committee functioned as a department
of the Women's Central. The members interviewed candidates daily,
answered hundreds of applications by letter, and investigated refer-
ences. Using Florence Nightingale's principles of nursing conduct
as a guide, the committee established definite rules for candidates.
For example, prospective nurses had to be between thirty and forty-
five years of age, physically fit, willing to submit to army disci-
pline, and willing to abandon hoop skirts. 131 By November, 1861,
the committee had sent thirty-two women to military hospitals. 132

The period of training for most of these nurses was about one
month. One wonders how well this short training prepared the nurse
for her work. For example, The Hospital Steward's Manual of 1862
listed the following duties for nurses in military hospitals:

Each nurse was assigned ten patients. In addition to the
usual bedside care under orders of physicians and stew-
ards—bathing, dressing wounds, etc.—nurses were charged
with the supervision of the washing and the distribution

130 Greenbie, p. 64.
131 Alcott, p. xxvii.
132 Maxwell, p. 66.
of clothing, care of the linen room, mending, and attention to special diets. Until abolished later in the war, the post of wardmaster gave a man authority over all nurses, but head nurses, whether men or women, bore the responsibility for the condition of the beds (with particular attention to lice and bedbugs!), for the emptying of chamber pots, bedpans and urinals, and for daily sweeping, ventilation, light, and warmth. They must see that meals and medicines appeared on time, attend roll calls, report to the stewards, accompany doctors on their rounds, note orders, and make sure they were carried out. Subordinate nurses, besides their usual duties, read to, amused, wrote letters for, and generally soothed their patients. 133

First Group of Army Nurses from New York City

Not all army nurses were the products of recruiting and training programs. Many women rebelled against the regulations and standards set up by volunteer nursing committees and attempted to make their own way into army hospitals. Henry Raymond, editor of the Times, sponsored one such group of women. In fact, they were the first women from New York City to leave for the front, Elizabeth Blackwell's nursing program being only in the organization stage at that time.

On May 3, 1861, not quite a month after war broke out, Mr. Raymond put six women, armed with a letter to Acting Surgeon General Wood, on the train for Washington. When the women reached their destination, they found only one military hospital that would accept them. It was filled with smallpox cases, and only one woman, Miss Adelaide Thompson, agreed to nurse these patients. The others eventually returned to New York after their funds ran out.

133 Alcott, p. xxxii.
Miss Thompson reported to the Women's Central correspondence committee about the sordid conditions of military hospitals. She worked in a six-room brick building with such meager facilities that the laundry and cooking were done in the same room on an old stove. Eating utensils were even more scarce, and Miss Thompson generally fed two or three men from the same plate.  

A doctor came to the hospital only a few hours each day; the rest of the day and all night Miss Thompson was alone with the sick men. Often she had to sleep in the same room with dead men for whom the undertaker had not yet come. Overwork caused the death of the old Irish woman who did the laundry. Miss Thompson herself suffered an attack of blood poisoning and left the hospital an invalid.  

The Hospital Transport Service  

When the Union army began making preparations for the Peninsular Campaign early in the spring of 1862, the Surgeon General's Office found it could not possibly cope with all the medical problems that would arise. Since this part of the country was largely swamp and river land, malaria would be as much a danger as bullet wounds. The army had to find a way to provide adequate hospital facilities for the increased number of sick soldiers.  

The Sanitary Commission met this need by creating the Hospital Transport Service. Commission secretary Frederick Olmsted asked the Secretary of War for the use of some steamers, which were made over into hospital boats. These boats gathered the sick and wounded from}

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134 Greenbie, pp. 70-71.
135 Ibid., p. 71.
the areas around the James, Pamunkey, and York Rivers and transported them to nearby base hospitals.

Women became the matrons or superintendents of these floating hospitals. They checked the beds, linens and clothing of each patient and had charge of all food supplies and eating arrangements. In addition they supervised the wards and the nursing staff. Frederick Olmsted appointed three women from New York City to his central executive staff of four which directed the work of the transports: Mrs. William Preston Griffin, Georgeanna Woolsey, and Eliza Woolsey Howland. 136

The first steamer Olmsted commissioned was the Daniel Webster, an old relic described as "stripped of everything movable but dirt." 137 The Commission completely re-outfitted it to accommodate two hundred and fifty wounded men. Mrs. Griffin was the chief superintendent during the Daniel Webster's trial run. On April 30, 1862, she and her staff arrived at the mouth of the York River. When they sailed again, bound for New York, they had on board a capacity load of wounded. 138 The Sanitary Commission rebuilt a total of six ships for hospital use. The boats worked between the Peninsular region and Boston, New York, Philadelphia, and Baltimore, taking away the sick and wounded and bringing back additional supplies or personnel.

Although the Transport Service accepted any qualified nurse, its nurses tended to be from the upper class. 139 Several of Mrs.

136 Ibid., p. 127.
137 Nevins and Thomas, p. 220.
138 Young, p. 176.
139 Greenbie, p. 130.
Daly's associates worked for a time in the transport service. Mrs. George Strong, for example, volunteered for work on the Rappahannock; however, Mrs. Daly, who never had a good word for Mrs. Strong, spoke of the latter's activity as merely a momentary whim.\footnote{140}

Mrs. Daly opposed her close friend, Harriet Whetten's, decision to enter the transport service. Harriet, she felt, did not possess the right qualities for nursing. "If I were the boys, I should not want a lady about my sickbed unless she were some motherly person. Harriet will never be a motherly-looking person, whatever age she may attain."

\footnote{141} (Neither Mrs. Daly nor her editor refer to Miss Whetten's age. She was probably close to Mrs. Daly's age, thirty-eight.) In The Other Side of War Katherine Wormeley (fourth member of Olmsted's central staff) noted that Miss Whetten played an active and heroic part in the nursing work of 1862.\footnote{142}

The Woolsey Family

The memoirs and correspondence of the Woolsey sisters and their mother provide the most complete account of New York women's nursing efforts during the Civil War. The Woolsey family comprised the mother, seven girls, and one boy. Just prior to his son's birth Charles William Woolsey\footnote{143} had drowned, leaving his wife Jane the sole provider for their large family. The family, however, was well-to-do and the sisters were better educated than most women then.

\footnote{140}{Hammond, p. 131.}
\footnote{141}{Ibid., p. 77.}
\footnote{142}{Cited in Hammond, p. xxviii.}
\footnote{143}{Woolsey had been the president of Yale.}
Reared by a mother who hated slavery (although her ancestors for generations had been Virginia slaveholders), the Woolsey girls were ardent abolitionists and strong Republicans. One of the sisters wrote of the family that they had cut their political teeth on The New York Tribune, and were in the right frame of mind to keep step with the steady march to the inevitable through the Kansas perplexities, the John Brown raid, and the election of Mr. Lincoln, to the firing of the first gun by the Rebels upon the national flag at Fort Sumter. 144

The Woolseys thus naturally entered enthusiastically into war aid efforts. The four girls who enlisted as nurses in the army--Georgeanna and Jane Woolsey, Mary Woolsey Howland, and Eliza Woolsey Howland--served on hospital transports with the Army of the Potomac, in field hospitals at the front, and in army hospitals in Washington, D.C., and Rhode Island. Mrs. Woolsey worked with her daughter Georgeanna at the battle of Gettysburg in July, 1863.

Georgeanna, not yet thirty, somehow overcame the age barrier for nurses and, with her sister Eliza Howland, was among the first women selected as nursing trainees by the Women's Central. Georgeanna described her review by the Examining Board.

It had to decide upon my physical qualifications; and so, having asked me who my grandfather was, and whether I had had the measles, it blandly put my name down, leaving a blank, inadvertently, where the age should have been, and I was launched . . . into a career of philanthropy more or less confused. 145

Both sisters finished their training in June, 1861. The clothing assigned to them for their work included the following items.

... two grey cottonish cross-grained skirts, and a Zouave jacket giving free motion to the arms. . . .

144 Dannett, p. 31.
145 Ibid., p. 64.
Four white aprons with waists and large pockets; two stickout and washable petticoats to take the place of a hoop, and a nice long flannel dressing-gown, which one may put on in a hurry and fly out in, if the city is bombarded or "anything else." 146

The Sanitary Commission sent Eliza Woolsey Howland to Washington first. In an improvised hospital on the top floor of the U.S. Patent Office she nursed the wounded of the Nineteenth Indiana regiment. One of Eliza's letters to her husband indicated the nature of these makeshift quarters.

The great, unfinished lumber room was set aside for their [the Indiana regiment] use, and rough tables—I can't call them beds—were knocked together from pieces of the scaffolding. . . . About six men could be accommodated on one table. These ran the whole length of the long room, while on stacks of marble slabs, which were someday to be the floor, we spread mattresses, and put the sickest men. 147

Out of all this confusion some system and order gradually evolved. Mrs. Howland cited one improvement in the method of bringing food up to the top floor. At first the nurses had to run downstairs each time they needed something. Eventually an arrangement of pulleys outside one of the windows carried food and supplies up and down. "At any time of the day," stated Mrs. Howland, "barrels of water, baskets of vegetables, and great pieces of army beef might be seen crawling slowly up the marble face of the building." 148

During the Peninsular Campaign Mrs. Howland worked with her sister Georgeanna in the Hospital Transport Service. Poor health kept her from nursing on the field after the summer of 1862, but she continued working in the hospitals around Washington for the remainder of the war.

146 Ibid., p. 66.
147 Ibid., p. 81.
148 Ibid., p. 82.
Mary Woolsey Howland, wife of The Reverend Robert Howland, worked as a nurse chiefly in New York City. She became well known for her literary articles describing incidents of army and hospital life and for such wartime poems as "Taps," copies of which were sold at the New York Sanitary fair. 149

Mrs. Howland was very active in the New York fair. She supervised the work in the Floral Department, which occupied the center of the main fair building. The booth featured pillars wreathed with flowers, flower baskets, an arbor, and rustic stands. 150 Her family believed overexertion in hospital and fair work caused her early death in May, 1864. 151

The fourth sister, Jane Woolsey, began her nursing career at Portsmouth Grove Hospital in Rhode Island. From November, 1862, until the close of the war she served as Superintendent of the Fairfax Seminary Hospital in Alexandria. After the war Jane Woolsey worked with the Freedman's Bureau in Virginia. She also helped establish a nurses training school at the Presbyterian Hospital in New York and became its Resident Directress. Her book Hospital Days, written about her war experiences, was a thoughtful commentary on the successes and failures of wartime nursing. 152

Georgeanna Woolsey wrote the most detailed of the sisters' accounts of their nursing activity. Her letters and memoirs revealed

149 Brockett, p. 326.
151 Young, p. 381.
152 Ibid.
the nature of a nurse's life in army hospitals, on Sanitary Commission steamers, and in the camps along the fighting front. She felt the antagonism and resentment of many army surgeons created nurses' biggest problem. Since doctors were legally unable to keep women out of the hospitals, they were determined to make the women's lives unbearable. Georgeanna claimed very few surgeons had treated her with "even common courtesy" at the outset.

Some of the bravest women I have ever known were among this first company of army nurses. They saw at once the position of affairs, the attitude assumed by the surgeons, and the wall against which they were expected to break and scatter; and they set themselves to undermine the whole thing. 153

Not only working conditions, but also sleeping quarters were miserable. After long hours of duty a nurse sat down to an inadequate meal and spent the night in a "wretched closet just large enough for a camp bed to stand in." As far as Georgeanna was concerned, only the satisfaction of comforting sick and dying men in their time of deepest need enabled her to endure these conditions. 154

Miss Woolsey first encountered battlefield conditions when she worked on the hospital transports of the Sanitary Commission. Aboard the Daniel Webster she arrived at the York River during the siege of Yorktown. 155 The first sick men Georgeanna saw were malaria cases and were crowded in small log huts previously used by the rebels as barracks. Charles Stille, Sanitary Commission historian,

153 Dannett, p. 88.
154 Ibid.
155 Nevins and Thomas, p. 221.
reported that these men "were dying by scores, still clothed in their uniforms and even wearing their caps." 156

The medical personnel of the Daniel Webster worked rapidly to move the sick on board. At the end of the day they had loaded the transport to capacity (250 men). During the trip to New York Georgeanna and the other nurses carefully nursed and fed each wounded man. Stille stated that, as a result of the surgeons' and nurses' efforts, not a single man died on the trip. 157

Georgeanna also worked aboard the Knickerbocker. On its first trip she and Mrs. George Strong were appointed to put things in order and supervise supplies. In a letter to her mother Georgeanna described the nature of her work.

We set up our stove in the Knickerbocker, unpacked tins and clothing, filled a linen closet in each ward, made up beds for three hundred, set the kitchen in order, and arranged a black hole, with a lock to it, where oranges, brandy, and wine are stored box upon box. . . . I have a daily struggle with the darkeys in the kitchen, who protest against everything. About twenty men are fed from one pail of soup, and five from a loaf of bread, unless they are almost well, and then no amount of food is enough. 158

Agatha Young refers to Georgeanna's work aboard a third Commission transport, the Wilson Small, which was permanently assigned to the malarial river districts. The Wilson Small was continually short of supplies, and while aboard, Georgeanna and her fellow nurses developed shameless kleptomaniac talents. When a big ship arrived from the North, well equipped with supplies, Georgeanna

157 Ibid.
158 Dannett, p. 159.
visited it and returned with pockets full of "knives, forks, spoons, corkscrews, nutmeg graters and other assorted items." The women had no trouble with their consciences because the big ships were generally on their way north for more supplies.159

Later in 1862 Georgeanna worked with her sister Jane and their cousin Sarah Woolsey at the Portsmouth Hospital, where they cared for the wounded brought from the battlefield by Commission steamers. Portsmouth was a large hospital judging by Civil War standards; its wards held as many as four hundred and fifty men. Georgeanna and Jane Woolsey supervised the general medical patients, whereas Sarah had surgical cases.160

Georgeanna's work at Gettysburg in July, 1863, climaxed her nursing career. Having heard that her brother Charles had been wounded at Gettysburg, Georgeanna and her mother hurried to the battlefield. They arrived shortly after the fighting had ceased and found the news of Charles had been false. Sanitary Commission officials, however, persuaded the women to stay and help with the wounded. The two were placed in charge of the Commission's relief station, and they remained for three weeks. By the time they left, they had fed and nursed sixteen thousand wounded men.161

The Sanitary Commission urged Georgeanna to write a pamphlet about her experiences at Gettysburg to be sold for the Commission's benefit. She agreed, and to her surprise her pamphlet, "Three Weeks at Gettysburg,"162 became popular not only in America, but in England.

159Young, p. 179.
160Dannett, p. 197.
161Young, p. 290.
162See Appendix III for abridged text of this pamphlet.
The Commission ordered the distribution of ten thousand copies, the printing of which Georgeanna left in charge of her sister Abby.\textsuperscript{163}

The relief lodge run by Georgeanna and her mother was essentially a way-station between the battlefield and the railroad depot.\textsuperscript{164} Set up near the railroad tracks, it provided food and shelter for wounded men waiting for trains to the general hospital at Baltimore. Trainloads of wounded left twice a day, but often the loaded ambulances arrived too late, and the wounded men had to be cared for overnight.\textsuperscript{165}

The major task of the Commission workers was two-fold: caring for wounded soldiers until the train came and putting them safely on the train. Before long they had worked out a regular system for filling the train cars. A government surgeon supervised moving the wounded to the train cars (open baggage cars filled with straw) and directed their transfer from the ambulance to the train. Once on the train the wounded men received a final meal. Commission workers went from car to car with "soup made of beefstock or fresh meat, full of potatoes, turnips, cabbage, and rice, with fresh bread and coffee, and, when stimulants were needed, with ale and milk-punch or brandy."\textsuperscript{166}

The wounded who arrived too late for the train received the special attention of Georgeanna and her mother. Every morning and

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{163} Dannett, p. 263.  \\
\textsuperscript{164} Letterman Hospital was established nearer the field to care for soldiers too seriously wounded to be moved.  \\
\textsuperscript{165} Young, p. 289.  \\
\textsuperscript{166} Brockett, pp. 331-332.
\end{flushright}
evening the women dressed the men's wounds and saw to it that they were bathed, given clean clothing, and fed. The Woolsey girls were amused at the thought of their socialite mother performing such tasks. Abby Woolsey wrote, "Just imagine Mother in a straw hat and heavy Gettysburg boots, standing cooking soup for two hundred men at a time, and distributing it in tin cups; or giving clean shirts to ragged Rebels; or sitting on a pile of grocer's boxes, under the shadow of a string of codfish, scribbling her notes to us."\(^{167}\)

When Georgeanna and her mother had completed their work, four thousand soldiers too ill to be moved still remained in the government hospital at Gettysburg. The people of Gettysburg had been much impressed by the efforts of the two women and paid them tribute by holding a parade on the day of their departure. Two military bands escorted the Woolseys to the train, playing farewell to the tune of "the red, white, and blue."\(^{168}\)

After Gettysburg, in the winter of 1863, Georgeanna served at Hammond Hospital, Point Lookout, Virginia. During Grant's campaign of 1864 she served at Belle Plain, Fredericksburg, White House and City Point. In August, 1864, she helped set up the Beverly Hospital in Philadelphia. After the war Georgeanna married Dr. Francis Bacon and collaborated with her sister Eliza Howland in compiling a history of the family activities during the war. The memoirs were published privately in 1899 under the title of *Letters of a Family during the War for the Union.*\(^{169}\)

\(^{167}\)Young, p. 291.

\(^{168}\)Brockett, p. 341.

\(^{169}\)Young, p. 382.
Evaluation of Army Nurses

No matter how the social status, aptitude, or war record of individual Civil War nurses differed, they shared one common characteristic—lack of adequate training. Nurses turned out after a one-month special course had certainly not had time to master the fundamentals of nursing. Thus it is not surprising that surgeons and medical authorities often regarded them as nuisances.

In his study of physicians in the Union army, George Adams comments that the nurses' greatest failing was self-righteousness. "They came to the Army convinced of their moral superiority. . . . The insubordination they permitted themselves could hardly win the regard of their superiors."¹⁷⁰ Nurses' tendency to ignore drug prescriptions and diets caused army doctors much concern. A German woman secretly fed her brother beer and cabbage soup. Some women substituted home remedies for the prescribed medication.¹⁷¹

Army medical personnel generally appreciated the efforts of women who obeyed orders and minded their own business. Women working for the Sanitary Commission were especially cooperative, perhaps because they were assigned specific tasks and given the authority to carry out their work. Whereas Civil War nurses' ability and cooperation may be debated, there is no question that they raised the wounded soldier's morale. Adams, in fact, feels their true role was that of "mother-substitutes."¹⁷²

¹⁷¹ Alcott, p. xxx.
¹⁷² Adams, p. 183.
One of the nurses herself, Jane Woolsey, most accurately evaluated volunteer nursing during the Civil War.

Was the system of women nurses in hospitals a failure? There never was a system. That the presence of hundreds of individual women as nurses in hospitals was neither an intrusion nor a blunder, let the multitude of their unsystematized labors and achievements testify. So far as I know, the experiment of a compact, general organization was never tried. Hospital nurses were of all sorts and came from various sources of supply; volunteers paid or unpaid; soldiers' wives and sisters who had come to see their friends, and remained without any clear commission or duties; women sent by state agencies and aid societies; women assigned by the General Superintendent of Nurses /Miss Dix/; sometimes, as in a case I know of, the wife or daughter of a medical officer drawing the rations but certainly not doing the work of a "laundress." These women were set adrift in a hospital, eight to twenty of them, for the most part slightly educated, without training or discipline, without company organization or officers, so to speak, of their own, "reporting" to surgeons, or in the case of persons assigned to her, to the General Superintendent, which is very much, in a way, as if Private Robinson should "report" to General Grant.

... let a nurse be ever so obstinate, ignorant and flabby-minded, she will eagerly, even gaily, starve herself to feed a sick soldier. She may be totally imperious to ideas of order; she may love "hugger-mugger" and roundabout ways of getting at direct objects, she may hopelessly muddle the ward returns ... but she will cheerfully sacrifice time, ease and health to the wants and whims of a wounded man. 173

173 Young, pp. 291-292.
CHAPTER VIII

PATRIOTIC EXPRESSION DURING THE WAR

Individual Attitudes

Up to this point we have seen the activity of women in supply and nursing efforts. In this chapter we shall examine the attitudes of women toward the idea and purpose of the war itself. In diaries and correspondence, in anti-luxury campaigns, and through patriotic leagues the women of New York City expressed their support of government policy and their desire to promote the spirit of liberty.

Especially at the outset of the war patriotic letters from women poured into the Times office. One letter from the "Ladies of Brooklyn" suggested that a flag float over every house, "that our hopes may be fanned by the banner that has waved o'er the land of the free and brave."¹⁷⁴ Many women whose sons had volunteered for army duty willingly endorsed their sons' decision to fight for the Union. One mother who had watched her five sons leave stated, "If I had ten sons, instead of five, I would give them all sooner than have our country rent in fragments. The Constitution must be sustained at any cost."¹⁷⁵

Not all women could express such noble sentiments. Mrs. Daly, for instance, stated she would do anything as long as it did not involve giving up dear ones to the army. "Thank Heaven Charles / her

¹⁷⁴ Times, April 19, 1861, p. 4, col. 5.
¹⁷⁵ Moore, The Rebellion Record, I, 43.

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husband will be forty-five on the 31st of the month [October, 1861] and beyond the age of service! She felt she and her husband did their share by investing all their spare money in the government loan.

Mrs. Daly's patriotic spirit was stirred, however, by the attitude toward the war of a visiting English journalist. It was difficult, Mrs. Daly wrote, to sit silent while Mr. William Young of the Albion published "such contemptuous editorials about the American squabble." Arguing that Americans had not asked the European's advice, Mrs. Daly concluded, "He gains his bread here, and if he thinks us all so contemptible, pray why does he not return to glorious Old England and his great naval memories." 177

The average woman's patriotic feeling may have been sentimental, but generally she expressed herself rather conservatively. One exception, and a case of misguided patriotism, was a young Brooklyn girl who fancied herself an American Joan of Arc. She became obsessed with the idea that Providence had selected her to inspire and lead the Union forces to victory. Her parents, friends, and the family doctor tried without success to bring her to her senses. Finally the family sent her to the home of an aunt in Michigan for a rest.

The girl escaped from her aunt's home and, disguised as a boy, joined a Michigan regiment which saw action in the campaign for Chattanooga. During the battle of Chickamauga a minie ball pierced the girl's side and she died shortly after. Before her death she dictated the following note to her father:

176 Hammond, p. 60.
177 Ibid., p. 51.
Forgive your dying daughter, I have but a few moments to live. . . . I expected to deliver my country, but the Fates would not have it so. I am content to die. Pray, pa forgive me. Emily

P.S. Give my old watch to little Eph. 178

Other women moved by fanatic patriotic fervor climbed the lecture platform to defend a cause or attack another. Mrs. Daly generally had little use for such extremists. At one point she remarked, "It is a pity that the abolition female saints and the Charleston female patriots could not meet in a fair fight and mutually annihilate each other." 179 After the war had ended, reconstruction became a major issue of debate. Mrs. Daly noted that an eighteen year old girl was profitably exploiting this subject in a series of lectures before large audiences. She appraised the girl as "another Joan of Arc inspired by self-conceit versus patriotism." 180

Dress Reform Movement

The women of New York did not rely on words alone to express their patriotic spirit. In 1864 they organized an association whose purpose was to support the government economy by discouraging the purchase of imported goods. Wartime had created in the North a degree of prosperity not known since the panic of 1857. But instead of investing their new wealth in government loans, people spent it on imported luxuries. Commented the Chicago Tribune of May 2, 1864,

178 Moore, Women of the War, pp. 529-531.
179 Hammond, p. 143.
180 Ibid., p. 349.
"We are clothed in purple and fine linen, wear the richest laces and jewels and fare sumptuously every day."\textsuperscript{181}

A nation-wide newspaper campaign against extravagance began in 1864. The \textit{Times} warned that "this finery can be paid for only with gold. Every dollar of gold sent from the country enhances its price here, depreciates greenbacks, impairs the credit of the government, and directly tends to prolong the war."\textsuperscript{182} The New York \textit{Herald} estimated that "there is daily squandered in vain personal expenditure and idle show an amount of money nearly enough to pay the daily cost of the army."\textsuperscript{183}

Among women's groups the wives and daughters of Cabinet officers and members of Congress spoke out first against extravagance. They organized a Ladies' National Covenant pledged to discourage excessive spending, encourage the buying of domestic materials, and promote simplicity of dress. "For three years and the war, we pledge ourselves to each other and to the country, to purchase no imported articles of attire."\textsuperscript{184}

An address to the women of America by the Ladies' Covenant appeared in the \textit{Times} of May 5, 1864. The address claimed the American woman had not been sufficiently impressed with the fact that large purchases of imported luxuries hurt public welfare. It cited figures showing the increase in purchases of expensive foreign fabrics

\begin{footnotes}
\footnote{\textsuperscript{181} McMaster, A History of the People of the United States During the Lincoln Administration, p. 550.}
\footnote{\textsuperscript{182} Times, April 2, 1864, p. 6, col. 2.}
\footnote{\textsuperscript{183} McMaster, p. 550.}
\footnote{\textsuperscript{184} Ibid., p. 551.}
\end{footnotes}
and goods during the war years. Importations in one week at the New York Custom House had amounted to five million dollars. The address concluded, "It must not be said of us that we have been willing to give up our husbands, sons, and brothers . . . and yet refuse to renounce our laces, silks, velvets, and diamonds."\textsuperscript{185}

The women of New York responded by holding a meeting at Cooper Union on May 16, 1864. Twenty-five hundred of them attended the meeting and formed an organization known as Woman's Patriotic Association for Discouraging the Use of Imported Luxuries. The group issued the following pledge, which it asked the women of the country to adopt.

\begin{quote}
We, the undersigned, during the continuance of this war of rebellion, pledge ourselves to refrain from the purchase of imported articles of luxury for which those of home manufacture can be substituted. \textsuperscript{186}
\end{quote}

Mrs. Daly was elected president of the Board of Managers of the association. The ladies made a good choice in this case, for thrift and economy were part of Mrs. Daly's Dutch heritage. When Mrs. Daly began making inquiries about the manufacture of domestic goods, however, she became rather disillusioned with the project. Many domestic articles were so poorly made that she wondered if American manufacturers were worthy of women's patriotic support. Domestic goods were also overpriced, according to Mrs. Daly. She found that the manufacturer tried to keep his price as high as possible and yet undersell his foreign competitor.\textsuperscript{187}

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{185} \textit{Times}, May 5, 1864, p. 3, col. 1.

\textsuperscript{186} McMaster, p. 551.

\textsuperscript{187} Hammond, p. 306.
\end{flushleft}
The New York dress reform movement encountered much opposition. Some people said its measures were too severe or were nonsensical; on the other hand, others were dissatisfied with the plan because it did not go far enough or call for enough self-denial. A Times article of June 12, 1864, attempted to clear up some of the misunderstanding and defend the Patriotic Association's stand. The Patriotic Association, said the Times, attempted to give unity and direction to a movement subscribed to by many women on an individual basis. The group did not intend, however, to practice extreme self-denial or reject those luxuries they already possessed. The article endorsed future limitation and moderation, but asked what could be gained by dispensing with items already purchased. 188

Although the Times felt the dress reform movement made satisfactory progress, 189 the movement effected very little reduction in the purchase of imported goods. Very soon other newspapers were again denouncing women for their extravagance. 190 It seems that, although many women sincerely supported the dress reform movement, this issue tended to be overshadowed for them by the greater problems of the war itself.

Women's Loyal League

The women of New York organized in support of another war issue, namely, the abolition of slavery. Morale and patriotic spirit were low in the North early in 1863 after a succession of Confederate vic-

188 Times, June 12, 1864, p. 5, col. 1.
189 Ibid.
190 McMaster, p. 551.
tories. Charles Sumner had introduced in Congress a constitutional amendment forever banning slavery (the Proclamation had only freed slaves in areas still in rebellion), but at this point it seemed uncertain whether the measure could command the necessary two-thirds majority.

Earlier, in 1862, Henry Stanton and his family had moved to New York City, where he had been appointed Surveyor of the Port of New York. Soon after Elizabeth Cady Stanton had established her family in its new home, she persuaded her friend Susan Anthony, whose father had recently died, to come to New York as her guest. In 1863 the workers and the cause were brought together when Henry Stanton suggested to the two women that they organize a movement in support of Sumner's amendment. 191

Mrs. Stanton and Susan responded immediately by drawing up plans for a women's loyalty meeting. In an article in the Tribune they urged the women of New York City not only to participate in charity work, but also to exercise their right in determining government legislation. "To counsel grim-visaged war seems hard to come from women's lips," wrote Mrs. Stanton, but she added, "better far that the bones of our sires and sons whiten every Southern plain . . . than that liberty should plead no more for man." 192

Mrs. Stanton and Susan followed this appeal with a "Call" for a national women's convention. Feeling that the war was essentially a conflict between freedom and slavery, the women wanted northern women to take a definite stand for freedom.

191 Flexner, p. 109.
192 Anthony, p. 167.
In nursing the sick and wounded, knitting socks, scraping lint, and making jellies, the bravest and best may weary if thoughts mount not in faith to something beyond and above it all. . . . A grand idea, such as freedom . . . is needful to kindle and sustain the fires of high enthusiasm. 193

The Women's National Convention on the War met May 14, 1863, at the Church of the Puritans. Hundreds of women crowded into the church. Miss Anthony opened the meeting by reading the "Call."

Her ensuing address, the main speech of the day, constituted a plea for universal emancipation. She urged her audience to "forget conventionalisms; forget what the world will say" and get out and work for justice and the right. 194

The following day (May 15) the women held a second meeting to perfect the organization of the Women's Loyal League. Both Miss Anthony and Mrs. Stanton stated that they would not pledge unconditional loyalty to the government, being loyal only to "freedom and humanity." Since the other women concurred in this resolution, the League's formal pledge read as follows:

We, the loyal women of the nation . . . hereby pledge ourselves one to another in a Loyal League, to give support to the government in so far as it makes a war for freedom. 195

The abolitionist-tinged convention further pledged to collect a million signatures to a petition asking Congress to pass the Thirteenth Amendment. The meeting closed with the election of Mrs. Stanton as president of the League and Susan, secretary.

By the end of May the two women had opened a small office in Cooper Union, and for fifteen months they labored to get signatures

193 Ibid., p. 168.
194 Ibid.
195 Ibid.
for their petition. Mrs. Stanton sent a continuous stream of letters to women's groups as far away as Michigan, Wisconsin, and California. Miss Anthony supervised the work of some two thousand men, women, and children who actually circulated the petitions.196

One million signatures would have meant the names of one-twentieth of the population of the northern states--what Eleanor Flexner rightly terms an impossible goal.197 Yet by February, 1864, the women had 100,000 names for Senator Sumner to present to Congress, and by August they had gathered nearly 400,000.198

A project of such size and scope involved much expense. To Miss Anthony fell the task of raising the necessary funds to offset such expenses as rent, hired clerks, postage, and printing. She realized a small profit from a series of lectures she gave at Cooper Union, and Henry Ward Beecher's church donated one Sunday's collection amounting to two hundred dollars. The most successful financial scheme Miss Anthony devised was charging one cent "for the privilege" of signing the petition. The pennies she collected amounted to three thousand dollars. So efficiently did she manage the League's finances that, when she closed her office at the end of the war, the total amount outstanding was $4.72, a debt she herself paid.199

Summary of Women's Role

During the war women manifested their patriotic spirit in many ways. The women in New York City were probably better organized in

196 Flexner, p. 110.
197 Ibid., p. 111.
198 Anthony, p. 169.
199 Ibid., p. 170.
their work than many other northern groups, but their activity was very similar to efforts throughout the North. In everything women did during the war they set a precedent, for never before had women participated to such an extent in war relief. When one considers the "newness" of women's role, then he cannot help being amazed at the overall efficiency and success of their work.
PART III

SIGNIFICANCE OF WOMEN'S RELIEF WORK
The end of slaughter and human sacrifice came in 1865. The reaction of New York City to the news of Lee's surrender was mass celebration. Whereas enthusiastic and patriotic display had attended the preparations for war in 1861, four years later the demonstrators evinced relief and thanksgiving. Georgeanna Woolsey and her mother witnessed the celebration in Wall Street and were deeply moved by the spirit of the crowd.

We took a Fulton Street omnibus, which was entirely empty but for ourselves and drove down to the neighborhood of the Custom House. As we came near the streets were more and more blocked, thousands and thousands of men standing, crowding upon each other. . . . As the omnibus came to a stand, not able to move a step further, they were singing as if their hearts would burst:

Praise God from whom all blessings flow,
Praise Him, all creatures here below;
Praise Him above, ye heavenly host,
Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

A young man, half fainting with fatigue, threw himself into the omnibus, saying, "They have been at it for hours." 200

Spur to Philanthropic Activity

The end of the war did not mean the end of philanthropic effort on the part of many women. Louisa Lee Schuyler's postwar career was one example. The strain of her work with the Women's Central almost ruined her health, but by 1872 she had recovered sufficiently to

200 Dannett, p. 354.
organize a new attack on suffering and disease. She founded the New York State Charities Aid Association, which she headed for the next fifty years. In 1874 she helped establish the first nurses training school in America at Bellevue Hospital. The climax of her career came in 1923 when she was awarded the Roosevelt medal for her contributions to nursing and social work. 201

Women learned much about the meaning of philanthropy through their war work. From the beginning their work was imbued with a warmth toward the soldiers. However, at first their efforts were provincial in nature; their concern was for their relatives or the boy next door. Eventually women began to realize that they could not limit benevolence to township or state, or even to one side. By the time the war ended, they were ready to accept the idea that humanitarian work has no boundaries. Women like Clara Barton began to extend their efforts along international lines, and the result was such organizations as the Red Cross.

Increased Professional Opportunity

Women's relief efforts during the war had practical benefit for themselves as well as for society. In the first place their organization of relief societies and their administration of supply collection taught them valuable lessons in business procedure. Through their work they established contact with business and professional leaders and impressed these men with their aptitude for management and finance. After the war such business schools as the Packard Commercial School in New York City offered admission to women as well

201 Greenbie, p. 204.
as men. Matthew Vassar, a Poughkeepsie brewer whom local women had induced to contribute substantially to army relief efforts, established Vassar College for women's educational advancement.

The most significant professional advance made by women during the war was in nursing. Women's presence in hospitals was not only a novelty, but a significant event in American social history. The estimated 3,200 women that labored in army hospitals and camps were amateurs at their profession and made mistakes, but their work awakened the country to the need for nursing and an organized program of nurses training. Shortly after the war a nursing bureau was set up in Washington and schools for nurses were established in large northern cities. 202

Two-fold Significance

Women's most significant gains were social and psychological. On the one hand, women moved from a position of dependence to one of freedom; on the other, they gained confidence in themselves. 203 Before the war women were not trusted to make decisions or act for themselves. Men felt women must be protected, chaperoned, or shielded. A woman should not appear in public places without her husband and never with another man. Law courts, the lecture platform, and the theater were closed to women who wished to remain respected.

The war did not bring women complete emancipation. But it did shake the ancient beliefs in women's moral and intellectual frailties

202 Maxwell, p. 69.
203 Young, pp. 349-350.
and impress men with women's business and professional abilities. Agatha Young states that the change was basically the transfer of women, in the minds of men, "from the category of the protected to the category of the free."204

In the process of winning the confidence of others, women gained confidence in themselves. The woman's rights movement resumed, but its character and purpose had changed. Women were not as concerned about reforming property and guardianship laws as they were about altering working conditions and gaining the vote. They had established themselves as a social force; the next step was to assert their economic and political rights.

How meaningful or penetrating were these changes in women's status? Agatha Young concludes: "Nor was it merely a few gifted women who emerged from the war with increased stature and greater freedom, for the benefits accrued to the whole generation whether or not they were capable as individuals of making use of them.205

204 Ibid., p. 24.
205 Ibid., p. 350.
APPENDICES
APPENDIX I

"An Appeal":

"To the women of New York and especially to those already engaged in preparing against the time of wounds and sickness in the Army.

"The importance of systematizing and concentrating the spontaneous and earnest efforts now making by the women of New York, for the supply of extra medical aid to our Army through its present campaign, must be obvious to all reflecting persons. Numerous Societies, working without concert, organization or head,--without any direct understanding with the official authorities,--without any positive instructions as to the immediate or future wants of the Army,--are liable to waste their enthusiasm in disproportionate efforts, to overlook some claims and overdo others, while they give unnecessary trouble in official quarters, by the variety and irregularity of their proffers of help or their inquiries for guidance.

"As no existing organization has a right to claim precedence over any other, or could properly assume to lead in this noble cause, where all desire to be first, it is proposed by the undersigned, members of various circles now actively engaged in this work, that the women of New York should meet in the Cooper Institute, on Monday next at 11 o'clock A.M., to confer together, and to appoint a General Committee, with power to organize the benevolent purposes of all into a common movement.

*Times, April 28, 1861, p. 8, col. 6."
"To make the meeting practical and effective, it seems proper here to set forth briefly the objects that should be kept in view. The form which woman's benevolence has already taken, and is likely to take, in the present crisis, is, first, the contribution of labor, skill and money in the preparation of lint, bandages, and other stores, in aid of the wants of the Medical Staff; second, the offer of personal service as nurses.

"In regard to the first, it is important to obtain and disseminate exact official information as to the nature and variety of the wants of the Army; to give proper direction and proportion to the labor expected, so as to avoid superfluity in some things and deficiency in others; and to this end, to come to a careful and thorough understanding with the official head of the Medical Staff, through a Committee having this department in hand. To this Committee should be assigned the duty of conferring with other associations in other parts of the country, and especially, through the Press, to keep the women of the loyal States everywhere informed how their efforts may be most wisely and economically employed, and their contributions of all kinds most directly concentrated at New York and put at the service of the Medical Staff. A central depot would, of course, be the first thing to be desired.

"In regard to the second form of benevolence—the offer of personal service as nurses—it is felt that the public mind needs much enlightenment, and the overflowing zeal and sympathy of the women of the nation, a careful channel, not only to prevent waste of time and
effort, but to save embarrassment to the official staff, and to secure real efficiency in the service. Should our unhappy war be continued, the army is certain to want the services of extra nurses, not merely on account of the casualties of the field, but of the camp diseases originating in the exposure of the soldiery to a strange climate and to unaccustomed hardships. The result of all the experience of the Crimean war has been to prove the total uselessness of any but picked and skilled women in this department of duty. The ardor and zeal of all other women should therefore be concentrated upon finding, preparing and sending, bands of women, of suitable age, constitution, training and temperament, to the army, at such points and at such times as they are asked for by the Medical Staff.

"A central organization is wanted, therefore, to which all those desiring to go as nurses may be referred, where a Committee of Examiners, partly medical and partly otherwise, may at once decide upon the fitness of the candidate. Those accepted, should then at once be put under competent instruction and discipline--(for which it is understood a thorough school will be opened at once by the Medical Faculty of the City,) and as occasion offers, the best prepared, in successive order, be sent, under proper escort, to the scene of war, as they are wanted.

"It is felt that all who want to go, and are fitted to go, should have in their turn a fair chance to do so, and are not unlikely to be wanted sooner or later. Of these many may be rich and many poor. Some may wish to go at their own charges, and others
will require to be aided as to their expenses, and still others, for the loss of their time. But the best nurses should be sent, irrespective of these distinctions—as only the best are economical on any terms.

"It will at once appear that without a central organization, with proper authority, there can be no efficiency, system, or discipline in this important matter of nurses—and there can be no organization, to which a cheerful submission will be paid, except it originate in the common will and become the genuine representative of all the women of New York, and of all the existing associations having this kind of aid in view.

"It is obvious that such an organization will require generous contributions, and that all the women of New York and of the country, not otherwise lending aid, will have a direct opportunity of giving support to the object so near their hearts, through the Treasury of this common organization.

"To consider this matter deliberately, and to take such common action as may then appear wise, we earnestly invite the women of New York, and the Pastors of the Churches, with such medical advisers as may be specially invited, to assemble for counsel and action, at the Cooper Institute, on Monday morning next, at eleven o'clock."
APPENDIX III

Author's Note: Only those passages that are relevant to the work of the Sanitary Commission at Gettysburg are reproduced below. The underlined captions appearing in the text are mine and are intended to further clarify the major points of the article.

"Three Weeks at Gettysburg"*

Georgeanna Woolsey

Setting up the work. "This is the way the thing was managed at first: The surgeons left in care of the wounded three or four miles out from the town, went up and down among the men in the morning, and said, 'Any of you boys who can make your way to the cars can go to Baltimore.' So off start all who think they feel well enough; anything better than the 'hospitals', so called, for the first few days after a battle. Once the men have the surgeons' permission to go, they are off; and there may be an interval of a day, or two days, should any of them be too weak to reach the train in time, during which these poor fellows belong to no one,--the hospital at one end, the railroad at the other,--with far more than a chance of falling through between the two. The Sanitary Commission knew this would be so of necessity, and coming in, made a connecting link between these two ends.

"For the first few days the worst cases only came down in ambulances from the hospitals; hundreds of fellows hobbled along as

*Brockett, pp. 329-341.
best they could in heat and dust, for hours, slowly toiling; and many hired farmers' wagons, as hard as the farmers' fists themselves, and were jolted down to the railroad, at three or four dollars the man. Think of the disappointment of a soldier, sick, body and heart, to find, at the end of this miserable journey, that his effort to get away, into which he had put all his remaining stock of strength, was useless; that 'the cars had gone,' or 'the cars were full;' that while he was coming others had stepped down before him, and that he must turn all the weary way back again, or sleep on the roadside till the next train 'tomorrow!' Think what this would have been, and you are ready to appreciate the relief and comfort that was. No men were turned back. You fed and you sheltered them just when no one else could have done so; and out of the boxes and barrels of good and nourishing things, which you people at home had supplied, we took all that was needed.

"As soon as the men hobbled up to the tents, good hot soup was given all round; and over, their wounds were dressed,—for the gentlemen of the Commission are cooks or surgeons, as occasion demands,—and, finally, with their blankets spread over the straw, the men stretched themselves out and were happy and contented till morning, and the next train.

"On the day that the railroad bridge was repaired, we drove up to the depot, close by the town, and had things in perfect order; a first-rate camping-ground, in a large field directly by the track,
with unlimited supply of delicious cool water. Here we set up two stoves, with four large boilers, always kept full of soup and coffee, watched by four or five black men, who did the cooking, under our direction, and sang, nor under our direction, at the top of their voices all day,—

'Oh darkies, hab you seen my Massa? When this cruel war is over.'

Then we had three large hospital tents, holding about thirty-five each, a large camp-meeting supply tent, where barrels of goods were stored, and our own smaller tent, fitted up with tables, where jelly-pots, and bottles of all kinds of good syrups, blackberry and black currant, stood in rows. Barrels were ranged round the tent-walls; shirts, drawers, dressing-gowns, socks, and slippers (I wish we had more of the latter), rags and bandages, each in its own place on one side; on the other, boxes of tea, coffee, soft crackers, tamarinds, cherry brandy, etc. Over the kitchen, and over this small supply-tent, we women rather reigned, and filled up our wants by requisition on the Commission's depot. By this time there had arrived a 'delegation' of just the right kind from Canandaigua, New York, with surgeons' dressers and attendants, bringing a first-rate supply of necessities and comforts for the wounded, which they handed over to the Commission.

Daily routine. "Twice a day the trains left for Baltimore or Harrisburg, and twice a day we fed all the wounded who arrived for them. Things were systematized now, and the men came down in long ambulance trains to the cars; baggage-cars they were, filled with
straw for the wounded to lie on, and broken open at either end to let in the air. A Government surgeon was always present to attend to the careful lifting of the soldiers from ambulance to car. Many of the men could get along very nicely, holding one foot up, and taking great jumps on their crutches.

"When the surgeons had the wounded all placed, with as much comfort as seemed possible under the circumstances, on board the train, our detail of men would go from car to car, with soup made of beef-stock or fresh meat, full of potatoes, turnips, cabbage, and rice, with fresh bread and coffee, and, when stimulants were needed, with ale, milk-punch, or brandy. . . I do not think that a man of the sixteen thousand who were transported during our stay, went from Gettysburg without a good meal. Rebels and Unionists together, they all had it, and were pleased and satisfied. 'Have you friends in the army, madam?' a rebel soldier, lying on the floor of the car, said to me, as I gave him some milk. 'Yes, my brother is on______'s staff.' 'I thought so, ma'am. You can always tell; when people are good to soldiers they are sure to have friends in the army.' 'We are rebels, you know, ma'am,' said another. 'Do you treat rebels so?' It was strange to see the good brotherly feeling come over the soldiers, our own and the rebels, when side by side they lay in our tents. 'Hullo, boys! this is the pleasantest way to meet, isn't it? We are better friends when we are as close as this than a little farther off.' And then they would go over the battles together, 'We were here,' and 'you were there,' in the friendliest way.
"After each train of cars daily, for the three weeks, we were in Gettysburg, trains of ambulances arrived too late—men who must spend the day with us until the five P.M. cars went, and men too late for the five P.M. train, who must spend the night till the ten A.M. cars went. All the men who came in this way, under our own immediate and particular attention, were given the best we had of care and food. The surgeon in charge of our camp, with his most faithful dresser and attendants, looked after all their wounds, which were often in a shocking state, particularly among the rebels. Every evening and morning they were dressed.

"After the men's wounds were attended to, we went round giving them clean clothes; had basins and soap and towels, and followed these with socks, slippers, shirts, drawers, and those coveted dressing-gowns. Such pride as they felt in them! comparing colors, and smiling all over as they lay in clean and comfortable rows, ready for supper,—'on dress parade', they used to say. And then the milk, particularly if it were boiled and had a little whisky and sugar, and the bread, with butter on it, and jelly on the butter: how good it all was, and how lucky we felt ourselves in having the immense satisfaction of distributing these things, which all of you, hard at work in villages, and cities, were getting ready and sending off, in faith.

"We varied our dinners with custard and baked rice puddings, scrambled eggs, codfish hash, corn-starch, and always as much soft
bread, tea, coffee, or milk as they wanted. Two Massachusetts boys I especially remember for the satisfaction with which they ate their pudding. I carried a second plateful up to the cars, after they had been put in, and fed one of them till he was sure he had had enough. Young fellows they were, lying side by side, one with a right and one with a left arm gone.

Attitudes of people of Gettysburg. "The Gettysburg women were kind and faithful to the wounded and their friends, and the town was full to overflowing of both. The first day, when Mrs.______ and I reached the place, we literally begged our bread from door to door; but the kind woman who at last gave us dinner would take no pay for it. 'No, ma'am, I shouldn't wish to have that sin on my soul when the war is over.' She, as well as others, had fed the strangers flocking into town daily, sometimes over fifty of them for each meal, and all for love and nothing for reward; and one night we forced a reluctant confession from our hostess that she was meaning to sleep on the floor that we might have a bed, her whole house being full. Of course we couldn't allow this self-sacrifice, and hunted up some other place to stay in. We did her no good, however, for we afterwards found that the bed was given up that night to some other stranger who arrived late and tired: 'An old lady, you know; and I couldn't let an old lady sleep on the floor.' Such acts of kindness and self-denial were almost entirely confined to the women.

"Few good things can be said of the Gettysburg farmers, and I only use Scripture language in calling them 'evil beasts.' One of
this kind came creeping into our camp three weeks after the battle.
He lived five miles only from the town, and had 'never seen a rebel.'
He heard we had some of them, and had come down to see them. 'Boys,'
we said,--marching him into the tent which happened to be full of
rebels that day, waiting for the train.--'Boys, here's a man who never
saw a rebel in his life, and wants to look at you;' and there he
stood with his mouth wide open, and there they lay in rows, laughing
at him, stupid old Dutchman. 'And why haven't you seen a rebel?'
Mrs. ___ said; 'why didn't you take your gun and help to drive
them out of your town?' 'A feller might'er got hic!'--which reply
was quite too much for the rebels; they roared with laughter at him,
up and down the tent.

"The streets of Gettysburg were filled with the battle. People
thought and talked of nothing else; even the children showed their
little spites by calling to each other, 'Here, you rebel;' and mere
scraps of boys amused themselves with percussion-caps and hammers.
Hundreds of old muskets were piled on the pavement, the men who
shouldered them a week before, lying underground now, or helping to
fill the long trains of ambulances on their way from the field. The
private houses of the town were, many of them, hospitals; the little
red flags hung from the upper windows. Beside our own men at the
Lodge, we all had soldiers scattered about whom we could help from
our supplies; and nice little puddings and jellies, or an occasional
chicken, were a great treat to men condemned by their wounds to stay
in Gettysburg, and obliged to live on what the empty town could pro-
vide. . . . Besides such as these, we occasionally carried from our supplies something to the churches, which were filled with sick and wounded, and where men were dying,—men whose strong patience it was very hard to bear,—dying with thoughts of the old home far away, saying, as last words, for the women watching there and waiting with a patience equal in its strength, 'Tell her I love her.'

Summary. "For this temporary sheltering and feeding of all these wounded men, Government could make no provision. There was nothing for them, if too late for the cars, except the open field and hunger, in preparation for their fatiguing journey. It is expected when the cars are ready that the men will be promptly sent to meet them, and Government cannot provide for mistakes and delays; so that, but for the Sanitary Commission's Lodge and comfortable supplies, for which the wounded are indebted to the hard workers at home, men badly hurt must have suffered night and day, while waiting for the 'next train.' We had on an average sixty of such men each night for three weeks under our care,—sometimes one hundred, sometimes only thirty; and with the 'delegation,' and the help of other gentlemen volunteers, who all worked devotedly for the men, the whole thing was a great success, and you and all of us can't help being thankful that we had a share, however small, in making it so. Sixteen thousand good meals were given; hundreds of men kept through the day, and twelve hundred sheltered at night, their wounds dressed, their supper and breakfast secured—rebels and all.
"Our three weeks were coming to an end; the work of transporting the wounded was nearly over; twice daily we had filled and emptied our tents, and twice fed the trains before the long journey.

"Four thousand soldiers, too badly hurt to be moved, were still left in Gettysburg, cared for kindly and well at the large, new Government hospital, with a Sanitary Commission attachment.

"Our work was over, our tents were struck, and we came away after a flourish of trumpets from two military bands who filed down to our door, and gave us a farewell 'Red, white, and blue.'"
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