Helping Wounded Soldiers and Anxious Families: The United States Sanitary Commission and the Origin of Modern Philanthropy in the United States

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HELPING WOUNDED SOLDIERS AND ANXIOUS FAMILIES:
THE UNITED STATES SANITARY COMMISSION AND THE ORIGIN OF
MODERN PHILANTHROPY IN THE UNITED STATES

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A THESIS
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Arts
(in History)

The Graduate School
The University of Maine
May 2020

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by Martin L. Novom, CFRE

Thesis Advisor: Dr. Nathan Godfried

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This thesis explores an aspect of the American Civil War, the federally authorized
civilian effort to assist the Medical Department of the U. S. Army, known as the United States
Sanitary Commission. This work covers its active years, 1861-1865, and the Commission
leaders based in Washington, D.C., and New York City. It also pays attention to women
throughout the North who populated some 7000 Ladies Aid Societies established to help support
the Commission. The leaders and the women shared the same goal, to improve the health care
for wounded and ill Union soldiers. The Ladies Aid Societies also created a high profile public
activity, a set of hugely successful fundraising events, called Sanitary Fairs, that significantly
boosted the sagging public morale.

The central issue warranting attention is the linkage between the Commission, Ladies Aid
Societies, and the Sanitary Fairs. This thesis argues that there was a causal connection between
these three and that they jointly created a crucial social engagement framework for
noncombatants with two significant outcomes. First, it resulted in an unprecedentedly high level
of charitable gifts that remained unsurpassed until after the First World War. Secondly, it
demonstrated to nineteenth century women new opportunities for voluntary activity in social
advocacy. Also, the outcomes reveal some unexpected discoveries. Among them is that the
Sanitary Commission was the first non-sectarian national fundraising effort in the United States.

Primary research included contemporary newspapers, diaries, broadsides, Ladies Aid Societies correspondence, Commission minutes and ledgers, and memoirs of some of the volunteers and leaders involved. The secondary research examined aspects of the history of American philanthropy, women’s associations, medical treatment, nineteenth century communications, and social movements; all areas that intersected with the Sanitary Commission, Societies, and Fairs.

As a means of better understanding the interconnectedness of the Commission, Societies, and Fairs, this thesis employs a tripartite view of philanthropy, made up of volunteering, volunteer leadership, and charitable giving. Given this perspective, three key players receive attention: Henry Bellows, President of the Board of the Commission; Mary Livermore, Commission volunteer and designer of the Sanitary Fairs; and Frederick Law Olmsted, Secretary-General of the Commission. Each of these three represented one of the three parts of philanthropy in action. Collectively they are a set of archetypes and, as such, are the progenitor of philanthropic activities of modern American nonprofits.

This thesis offers insights for scholars interested in the eleemosynary sector, specifically those who focus on the history of philanthropic support. It also contributes to scholarship on social movements, voluntary associations, and nineteenth century women's activities.
DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my wife and life partner, Deborah S. Hawkins, Ph.D., for her inspiration, loyal support and endless patience. She recognized the historical scholar in me long before I did.
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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

The vast social, military, economic, and political upheavals connected with the American Civil War have attracted considerable historical scholarship. However, there is a set of remarkable activities from this period that remain insufficiently studied. The center of these activities was the first civilian organization explicitly established to assist the Federal government in its efforts to improve healthcare for wounded and sick Union soldiers during the war. Concerned women and civic leaders of the Northern states became aware that volunteer troops amassed for the conflict were at serious health risk from inadequate preparations by the military. These civilians pushed hard, obtained the necessary authorization, and successfully launched a new kind of national organization, the United States Sanitary Commission. While women of the middle nineteenth century had far less freedom of action and involvement outside the home than their male counterparts, order and health in the domestic realm, especially when it came to the welfare of their men, was an area where women brooked almost no interference. Convinced that their activities would make a significant difference, these activists strove to help protect the health of their fighting men and boys. The story of the Sanitary Commission, and how it engaged the noncombatants at the home front, is familiar to some Civil War scholars because of its unusual circumstances and powerful legacy.

The Sanitary Commission's main activities lasted only four years, but the impact of their work is felt even today. The Commission functioned as a health and wellness partner with the U.S. Army, providing vital services to Union soldiers. The Army provided nurses, hospital buildings, medical staff, transportation of wounded and sick, basic food rations and basic medical supplies. The Commission complimented the Army’s work by providing sanitary
instruction to doctors, conducting sanitary inspections of all camps, clinics and hospitals, filling in gaps of medical supplies and food, and supplying a wide range of essential comfort items (for example blankets, hospital clothing, quilts, and comforters). The Commission helped staff and oversee more than 1200 hospitals and clinics. Their work provided healthcare for more than 500,000 soldiers. Without the Commission, the suffering and death of Union soldiers would have been considerably higher.

The timing of the Commission's birth was a result of the confluence of several regional activities and national movements in the United States concurrent with the war. These included shifts in political power, difficulties with the response of the Federal government to the states that seceded, and more in-depth exposure of national and international news. To this was added the widened acceptance of the practicalities of modern sanitation when large numbers of people congregated far from their homes. To scholars probing this period, the Commission is a well-examined, and an appropriately analyzed, organization. The available literature, both during its existence and over the 155 years since it completed its primary work, includes thorough coverage of its origins and the organization's development, particularly about its early struggles with Congress and its ongoing friction with the Medical Department of the Army. Much of the Commission's work has been scrutinized and noted. This includes the scale of its impact on troop health, the scope of the improvement in camp hygiene, the breadth of deaths prevented, the vastly improved recovery rates from wounds, and the overall improved comfort of wounded and ill soldiers. Separately studied, to a far lesser degree than the Commission itself, are the myriad activities of the thousands of local women's groups throughout the Northern home front, in the form of what came to be known as Ladies Aid Societies. Finally, the efforts by some of these local Societies resulted in a group of grand fundraising fairs during the war, called Sanitary
Fairs, which is probably the least known and examined of the three activities; less studied than the Ladies Aid Societies and far, far less than the Commission itself. Scholars have inadequately studied the ways that the three activities were interconnected. It is the connections and interactions between these three parts that provide much of the attention for this paper.

Scholars view the Commission, the Societies, and the Fairs according to the perspective they bring to bear on the vast panorama of the war and its massive effects. Usually, they are noted as symptoms of a broader problem or issue, either seen through the lens of social, political, economic, or military events. Closely following the end of the Civil War, there was practically a flood of publications, most summarizing the military aspects of the war, but also including a stream of writing on views from female participants, frequently in their roles as nurses. Mary A. Livermore, with My Story of War: Civil War Memoirs, and The Boys in Blue, by her companion and colleague Jane Currie Blaikie Hoge, offer the best example of patriotic perspectives but also social commentaries.¹ Both authors offered a detailed picture of the Commission and the Sanitary Fairs and, to a much lesser degree, the Ladies Aid Societies. Nevertheless, they depicted all three parts as if they happened in a disconnected manner with little to no causal linkage. Another contemporary survey, also with a woman’s perspective, Women’s Work in the Civil War emphasized the contribution of overlooked individual women.² All three of these works conveyed the feelings and attitudes of participants blocked from fighting but who were engaged, nevertheless. The contention here is that there was an absence in these portrayals of any overarching connective theme or rationale. These authors were joined in 1944 by another survey of women’s contributions connected with the Commission, Lincoln’s Daughters of

Mercy, based on its records, by Marjorie Barstow Greenbie. Similar to the three earlier female perspectives, this author focused on the resourcefulness and courage of nurses during the war.

The official history of the Commission, written by one of the original members of the board, Charles Stille, offered details of activities and descriptions of Commission work not found elsewhere. However, the author provided what appears to be a justification of the Commission's tactics and policies rather than rigorous analysis. Predating the end of the war by a year, Frank B. Goodrich, published what he believed was an overview of all the charitable acts conducted during the war, not just those connected with the Commission and its related networks. While it had greater depth and accuracy regarding the Ladies Aid Societies than any previous publication, there was only a limited linkage with the Commission or the Fairs. They were a few journal articles in the twentieth century but no publications regarding the Commission, the Societies, or the Fairs, until 1956.

The situation changed with the appearance of William Quentin Maxwell’s Lincoln’s Fifth Wheel: The Political History of the U.S. Sanitary Commission, which provided the first overview of the Commission accompanied by the benefit of time. Written some 91 years after the fact, Maxwell did not focus on the nurses, the military, or social activities, but solely on the

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6 Frank B. Goodrich, The Tribute Book: A Record of the Munificence, Self-Sacrifice and Patriotism of the American People During the War for the Union (New York: Derby & Miller, 1865).
task of the Commission. Unfortunately, he devoted limited attention to the Sanitary Fairs and the Ladies Aid Societies. So, again Maxwell overlooked the critical connection between these three parts. This gap, concerning the connection between the Commission, Societies, and Fairs is a critical oversight in the scholarship. This paper offers a unique perspective on how the philanthropic activities of modern nonprofits are rooted in what happened during the Civil War and the role and interaction between these three parts.

Understanding the function that the Sanitary Commission played in setting a direction for modern nonprofit organizations requires a brief examination of philanthropy, and the role it played in the United States. Two “classical” works on philanthropy and society are key to that understanding. Kathleen D. McCarthy, a scholar of philanthropy and civil society, makes the case that the egalitarian ethos embodied in the Declaration of Independence set the stage for a steadily growing stream of competing interests and associations. Unlike the political revolution that resulted in that document, she asserts that America's associational revolution occurred with nominal fanfare. McCarthy points to examples of early leading Americans, often recognized for their legislative achievements, who, as private citizens, built faith in the value of individual benevolence. For example, she points to Thomas Jefferson's achievements, not as a political figure, but as an individual active in civic engagement with the University of Virginia.

She identifies four key roles that philanthropy and the nonprofit sector have played in American society. First, they have provided the power to delineate and define the social sector by creating institutions whose existence has helped to shape the public interpretation of reality. Hospitals, schools, reform organizations, and other charitable entities have helped to identify

9 Maxwell, 314.
11 McCarthy, 4.
those in society who have needs. Moreover, the formation of such organizations has helped to form cohesive communities of like-minded individuals. Second, philanthropy and nonprofits have fostered public-private partnerships where non-elected citizens play a role, however minor, that helped to utilize and manage the allocation of public resources. She asserts that this has strengthened the bonds of civic engagement. Third, the author points to the role philanthropy and nonprofits have played in promoting social advocacy. She reminds us that the right to petition and guarantees of freedom of assembly and speech were early amendments to the Constitution, which enabled even disenfranchised groups to engage in conversation and dialogue. Voluntary associations have provided a mechanism to help defuse conflict between disparate groups, and acted as a safety valve. The fourth and least studied function of philanthropy and nonprofits was economic: the spurring of economic growth through job creation, and capital accumulation. Her research divides the history of the American eleemosynary world before the Civil War into three phases. From 1780 to 1820, a slow growth period saw local activities that gradually built into a national infrastructure. The 1820s to 1830s was a distinct period with the growth of white male suffrage at the same time as a mass-based social reform. The final phase, the 1830s to 1860s, was a period that experienced immense social reform and national moral crusades.

Noted philanthropy scholar Robert H. Bremner offers a valuable contrast with his analysis of the history of American philanthropy. He emphasizes the effects religion had on adherents, as well as on skeptics. The author follows the trail of philanthropy, starting with community care for those troubled by adversity in early settlements, through the advocacy of

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religious leaders such as Cotton Mather and the Puritans who strove to do good in the world. Bremner makes the distinction that charitable impulses came from Europe as an imported product. He believes that colonists transformed this import into a uniquely American form that resulted from new influences and new circumstances. The imprint of religious guidance, Bremner tells us, formed much of the attitudes and behaviors of the early generations of these European transplants. He points to the strong impact of Cotton Mather and John Winthrop, whose writings linked Christian charity and religious devotion. Care for others became a recognized duty by nearly everyone. With the birth and expansion of Quaker expression in America, personal values of thrift, industry, and the importance of using one's economic power to care for the poor spread widely, and not just with the faithful.

Bremner attributes the sense of responsibility for the welfare of others to the impact of the Great Awakening, the first of several widespread religious revivals in America dating from 1730 to 1740. “Among the most important results of the Great Awakening were the fostering of humane attitudes and the popularization of philanthropy at all levels of society, but especially among the poorer classes.” In the period before the Civil War, the author ascribes much of America's inclination for societal improvement to the strident actions of several devoted servants to America's higher nature. He describes Anthony Benezet (1713 to 1784) as America's first true reformer and one of the earliest abolitionists. Bremner mentions Benezet’s concern for the poor, the sufferers of war, and relations between Indians and whites. Another devotee of inspired action was Benjamin Rush (1746 – 1813). With the American Revolution as the central experience of his life, Rush made it his life’s work to bring the manners and morals of citizens into harmony with the new republic’s institutions.

13 Bremner, 20.
This background about the role of philanthropy, and its origins in the United States, is a starting point to consider the Commission’s activities in this regard. To successfully build on this picture, we need to briefly examine the terminology and definitions commonly used in considering philanthropy. We begin with the findings of the Filer Commission, an effort of leaders of American philanthropy, government, and industry to collaboratively achieve greater clarity about charitable organizations and their interconnections with the business and civic worlds. Published in 1975, Giving in America: Toward a Stronger Voluntary Sector: Report of the Filer Commission on Private Philanthropy and Public Needs offered a new description to replace the public-private duality concept that had been the conventional perspective. The report identified the government, the marketplace, and philanthropy as the three main parts of American society. It shifted away from the traditional view of philanthropy as primarily large scale giving by the wealthy and dominated by private foundations. As a result, the term philanthropy came to include a more comprehensive range of meanings. The view that attached the term "philanthropy" to the latest crop of the super-wealthy, individuals like today's Bill Gates and Warren Buffet, has widened considerably since 1975. Now, the notion that donors engage in philanthropy at all giving levels is much more common.

There are a variety of reasons that we have achieved a more comprehensive understanding of the word philanthropy. When considering the development of the nonprofit sector and philanthropy, Olivier Zunz emphasizes the power of foundations. While there are several types of foundations recognized under I.R.S. codes, the largest group, 91%, is private foundations. This type of foundation, designed to hold funds from a single individual, family, or company, makes grants to charitable nonprofits. According to the Foundation Center, there are

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78,582 private foundations in the United States. Zunz believes that the history of American philanthropy has been shaped in significant part by the intentions of these wealthy individuals and families who have directed their charitable giving through their private foundations. These foundations collectively comprise only 16% of the total amount of charitable gifts compared with nearly 80% coming from individuals. Zunz attributes this shift in charitable gift support to the rise in disposable income among middle and working-class families in the last half of the twentieth century.

Charitable fundraising activity grew considerably more sophisticated since 1975, with fundraising staff members performing and perceived as professionals; this included the growth, development, and full acceptance of a recognized certification program for fundraisers. There is, as well, the growth of the entire nonprofit sector itself, with employment now exceeding 10% of the national workforce. Additionally, there is the growing public awareness that we are in the time of the peak years of the transfer of intergenerational wealth from the baby boomers, expected to be in the realm of $41 trillion. Philanthropy and the nonprofit sector is not an inconsequential part of the American social fabric, nor is it solely the playground of the wealthy.

One of the most lucid explanations of the current construct of philanthropy and philanthropic activity comes from Robert L. Payton, a leading philanthropic scholar and founder

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17 CFRE International, https://www.cfre.org/about/cfre/
of the Center on Philanthropy at Indiana University. He describes that philanthropy has three interconnected parts: volunteer giving, volunteer service, and volunteer association. This paper employs a commonly understood usage of this three-way division: charitable giving, which is donated money; volunteering, which is donated time; and volunteer leadership, which is the work of designated responsibility on behalf of the public. This study explores the three components of philanthropy, matches each one with a single individual during the Civil War, each of whom represents an archetype for the nonprofit sector.

The examination of the Sanitary Commission, the Ladies Aid Societies and the Sanitary Fairs, falls within the context of America's volunteer and charitable sector. The conduct of the Commission, together with the activities of the Societies and Fairs, provided a platform for women and other noncombatants to express their support for the war. The Commission, Societies, and Fairs became a showcase for volunteers, volunteer leaders, and donors. Also, there was a dominant gender structure at work within the volunteer-driven components of the Commission network. Women founded and populated these Societies, with men active in some of the public activities sponsored by these groups. Denied access to military, legislative, and business leadership opportunities, women during the Civil War played an active and essential role in channeling family concerns. Using a familiar form of cultural engagement, they also expressed their aspirations. As evident in the Northern abolitionist organizations, women played pivotal roles. As will be shown, the Commission, Societies, and Fairs all had an immense impact on nineteenth-century American life. This paper argues that the impact went well beyond their roles in supporting the war effort, linking volunteers and donors, and saving countless lives. The Commission, Societies, and Fairs created a social engagement framework that offered

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noncombatants a collective, neutral platform to express their longings about the war and their concerns for their men at risk. Also, we can trace more substantial cultural effects into the twentieth century, and in some ways, right up into the present. We can observe impacts in areas such as the role of women in society, modern healthcare practices, the advancement and acceptance of art and horticulture in public life, as well as volunteer engaged charitable fundraising. To substantiate these claims necessitates a more in-depth look at the Sanitary Commission, the Ladies Aid Societies, and their Sanitary Fairs.

Chapter 1, "Response to the Crisis," will outline the conditions that accompanied preparations for the emerging conflict and examine what that meant for the soldiers and the noncombatants who sought to support them. Chapter 2, "Three Individuals and Their Expressions of Philanthropy," will describe the development of the Sanitary Commission, what the new organization strove to do in order to respond to the traditional structure and attitudes of the U.S. Army, and how the Commission responded to the changing circumstances brought by the Civil War. It will also focus on the three individuals who represent a set of archetypes for the nonprofit sector. Chapter 3, "Ladies Aid Societies and Their Sanitary Fairs," will detail the rise, spread, and activities of the local Ladies Aid Societies and, in particular, the birth, development, and impact of their regional Sanitary Fairs. Chapter 4 will demonstrate how the web of activities of the three entities brought combatants and noncombatants together in common purpose, and to support the lasting impact of the Commission.
CHAPTER 2
RESPONSE TO THE CRISIS

Long-simmering political strife in the United States, based on the disagreement over slavery, was embedded in the Constitution and expanded over a series of conflicting positions between the South and North during the first half of the nineteenth century. Despite ongoing mediation efforts by leaders in the U.S. Congress, the election of Abraham Lincoln moved matters to an elevated stage of volatility and violence.\textsuperscript{21} The outbreak of hostilities with the attack on Fort Sumter, on April 12, 1861, pushed the two sides from harsh words and harangues to caissons and canons.

A Brief History of the Birth of the United States Sanitary Commission

The public perception of war in 1861 derived from the supposedly short and glorious conflict with Mexico. While not all were eager for battle, those so inclined naively assumed taking up arms against their countrymen (or, in the view of many Southern citizens, their former countrymen) would result in a glorious war, fought and won in short order. Unlike American soldiers in the twentieth century who fought in the First and Second World Wars, the Union forces gathered in the first years of this conflict came as volunteers supplied by the individual Northern states. It was almost two years before the Federal government enacted legislation to draft soldiers. Before the Civil War began, the U.S. Army had only 16,000 regular troops, and to this, President Abraham Lincoln called for 75,000 additional volunteer recruits. Each governor appointed the officers that led these volunteer troops without regard for their military experience

and, in far too many cases, with limited or questionable leadership skills. These volunteer soldiers assembled from all walks of civilian life. For many of them, this was the first time outside their state, and they found themselves in large national encampments, far from home and family. The vastly expanded Union army grew to 91,000, an increase in the size of nearly 600%. New soldiers, new officers, and new regiments, all contributed to creating significant gaps in military order. One of the most significant immediate difficulties was army camp sanitation and the risk of its deleterious impact on troop health.

As news of the opening of the conflict reached households throughout the Northern states, men and women reacted quite differently. Patriotic fervor did not fill all northern men, but those that stood ready to take up arms or to send the young men to do so acted within their capacity as privileged white men. They could own property, and, if so, they could vote in all jurisdictions. If able-bodied, and of the right age, they could serve in their local military regiment. In 1861 women in the United States, however, were expected to focus on the functions of home and hearth with no vote, limited property ownership, and no opportunity to serve their country by bearing arms. Drawn by the political tensions of the time, women and men functioned according to their accepted roles in society, and these were separate and distinct. The one area in mid-nineteenth-century America where women held sway was in domestic life, centered on nurturing, healing, and keeping household order. While men in the Northern states might have been engaged in political argumentation, advancing armchair military strategy, or chafing to enlist, the women observed something different. For them, the advancing events came with the knowledge that the men in their lives—sons, brothers, fathers, uncles, and male cousins—were about to venture forth to fight for their country but without the domestic support from

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women so carefully woven into daily life. As Union volunteer troops assembled in larger and larger numbers, the gaps in military leadership combined with the unpreparedness of men to function without their accustomed domestic support. The wives, mothers, sisters, aunts, and daughters were not there to cook, sew, and clean for them. The result was an enormous and utterly unexpected problem – tens of thousands of soldiers living in potentially unhealthy and unsanitary conditions.

Within days of the firing on Fort Sumter, women in the Northern states moved into action with the hope of supporting their men and their country. “When President Lincoln issued his proclamation, a quick thrill shot through the heart of every mother in New York. The Seventh Regiment left at once for the defense of Washington, and the women met at once in parlors and vestries. Perhaps nothing less than the maternal instinct could have forecast the terrible future so quickly.”

On April 26, 1861, Dr. Elizabeth Blackwell, the first female physician in the country, played a leading role in organizing a meeting of some 4,000 women in New York City to determine how women might best collectively help their fighting men. By meeting's end, they had formed a new organization, the Women’s Central Relief Association of New York (WCR), with the stated purpose of unifying and organizing their efforts in what became a mass movement of thousands of local groups of women throughout the Northern states.

The issues on the minds of these women concerned how they might do their part for the war. Could the WCR be a collecting place for needed supplies? Could they help organize women who wanted to follow in the footsteps of Florence Nightingale? Nightingale’s work to provide succor for the

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23 Mary A. Livermore, 128.
25 Humphreys, 4.
26 Stille, 40.
wounded and ill British soldiers during the Crimean War, 1853-1856, was known because her published works had an extensive readership in the United States. It took some time for Blackwell and her leadership companions to ascertain the scope of the developing situation.

Into this vortex of unanswered questions stepped Dr. Henry Whitney Bellows, a high profile New York City Unitarian minister, and a national leader in the Unitarian Church in America. Bellows, who would go on to become one of the eight founders, and the only President, of the United States Sanitary Commission, was invited by these women to the WCR founding meeting. As a result, he took the first steps to create the Commission, which became a widely dispersed nationwide network. Bellows was a member of the white elite class, highly educated and comfortable with the notion that it was men that got things accomplished. The site of the meeting of the WCR was the Cooper Union. It was an educational organization in New York City that Bellows and philanthropist Peter Cooper, had helped to open in 1859. The Cooper Union offered tuition-free education, beginning with applied sciences and engineering, for both men and women. The Great Hall, where the WCR meeting took place, was a venue for public forums and distinguished speakers on current events. It was in this same hall where Abraham Lincoln gave a speech on February 27, 1860, that placed him solidly in the national spotlight, before he became the Republican nominee for President. In this same public space, amidst the passion for “helping our men and boys,” Bellows confronted the necessity to find answers. Following the meeting, he immediately drew together a group of male leaders in medicine, law, and religious life to work out solutions to the problems. This group would become the leaders of a new national civilian organization linked with the Federal government.

27 Frank B. Goodrich, The Tribute Book: A Record of the Munificence, Self-Sacrifice and Patriotism of the American People During the War for the Union (New York: Derby & Miller, 1865), 74.
the United States Sanitation Commission. As the Commission took form, the WCR became one of some two hundred networked organizations throughout the North that connected the Commission with some 7,000 local women’s groups, often referred to as Ladies Aid Societies.

In its early meetings, Bellows and his leadership group expressed concern over troop preparedness, the hasty arrival in Washington of regiment after regiment, and the woefully inadequate War Department preparations to support them. Several of these men were physicians well acquainted with the newly developed sanitary practices that had proved so beneficial for the British troops in the Crimean conflict. What they understood about cleanliness in the healing environment was not yet standard medical practice. They were familiar with the response by the British Sanitary Commission in that conflict, its successes, and also cognizant of the difficulties it faced in overcoming public and governmental intransigence. Knowing that the new sanitary practices had a great effect in New York City gave them the confidence that such policies would have even greater importance for maintaining the health of the Union forces. In their minds, the ignorance of the Army Medical Division regarding these practices was building up to what they feared was a massive health catastrophe for the Army. Commission member Strong expressed this fear: “I don’t know about Cameron and the War Department, but the inefficiency of the Medical Bureau is criminal and scandalous.”

Bellows initiated correspondence with the Lincoln administration, via a letter to Simon Cameron, Secretary of War, on May 18, 1861. Armed with letters of introduction from friends in high places, he led a delegation and descended on Washington for what must have seemed an endless round of meetings. Their determination and persistence secured for them a meeting with

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28 Stille, 70.
29 Stille, 159.
30 Strong, 181.
both Abraham Lincoln and Simon Cameron. "Civilian and military listened respectfully, while Bellows harangued president, cabinet, and generals." By June 9, a Federal order authorized the appointment of the United States Sanitary Commission, as a new quasi-governmental entity, to initially undertake an inquiry on the state of the sanitary practices of the U. S. Army.

Bellows and his team received what they needed, a mandate to provide help to the Federal military effort. President Abraham Lincoln and Secretary Cameron reluctantly agreed that getting outside help to strengthen the sanitary situation of the Army was a worthy goal. Nevertheless, Lincoln was concerned that such an organization "might become a fifth wheel to the coach." It was an open question as to whether or not they could avoid becoming entangled with the Army's Medical Division, and with its allies in Congress. Taking their charge seriously, the Commission did a swift survey of the encampments in preparation for writing a report for the Lincoln administration. Unfortunately, it turned out that the sanitary conditions of the overcrowded and inadequately prepared army camps were even more dangerous than Bellows and his colleagues had feared. While the leadership of the Commission expressed their intention to achieve a speedy and efficacious turnaround in sanitary conditions, they also demonstrated their awareness of the importance of not alarming the general public. Once allowed "inside the tent," the Commission achieved broader support. They continuously advocated and installed improvements in sanitation practices throughout the Army, including bases, hospitals, and field clinics close to the fighting. Over the next four years, the Commission battled both germs and bureaucrats.

32 Stille, 86.
33 Stille, 532.
In addition to the challenges facing President Lincoln and his generals, there was a swirl of political forces, regional identity, and civilian impact issues that significantly complicated the work of the Commission right from its inception. 34 It may be difficult for us to comprehend that the politicians and public had no idea that the war would last for four long, excruciating years. Those working on behalf of the Commission and its struggles had only their conscience, moral code, or personal creed to guide them. Meanwhile, the dynamics of the American two-party political system was in turmoil, with the division of the Democratic Party and the ascendancy of the Republicans. War fever, especially in the early months of the conflict, combined with the withdrawal of numerous talented military officers from the Union army to follow their allegiances to individual Southern states, provided further instability. All these aspects played out in the structure, policies, programs, and responses of the Commission to the challenges of supporting the troops.

The Formation of a New Organization

Bellows and his team of volunteer leaders had few if any, existing models to follow on how to structure a new civilian-based organization that functioned solely to support a set of governmental and military functions. There were charitable organizations in their day, but none with a mission quite like this. Today, volunteer leaders intending to create a nonprofit organization can draw from a wide array of examples that have successfully served, and continue to serve, the American people. Without appropriate existing models, these highly educated and literate men, driven by eleemosynary principles, focused on their objective of aiding the war effort, relying heavily on their knowledge, professional experience, and social standing. They

34 Witold, Rybczynski, A Clearing in the Distance: Frederick Law Olmsted and America in the Nineteenth Century (New York: Scribner, 1999), 200.
naturally drew upon their areas of expertise in the law, medicine, religion, and public life. They sought expertise in fields where they lacked it. They made several decisions early in the life of the Commission that became critical for its success.

One of them was about funding the Commission. Their individual histories show they had personal and professional experience with the functioning practicalities of the Federal government, especially regarding how conditions were attached to any funding. Therefore, their decision to accept no government funding was a strategic one. “But from the very first, the design of the founders of the Commission was settled, that it should do its work only on the principle of that voluntary system of organization, which is one of the most striking characteristics of our American civilization, and which, with its free and untrammeled spirit has done such marvelous things for the country in every department of labor.” They thereby avoided unnecessary entanglements with governmental systems and the widely acknowledged taint of patronage. They had high expectations that they could rely on Americans in the Northern states to support this worthy endeavor.

They must have been confident that the strength of the cause, the importance of protecting and supporting the fighting men at risk, would connect strongly with the public and draw the necessary moral and financial support. This decision was a bold and prescient move on their part. As we shall see, they were correct, but obtaining the necessary support was a matter that was neither simple nor straightforward.

While the board of the Commission increased in size over time, its original members played a crucial role in shaping and overseeing this unusual organization. The June 9 order from Secretary Cameron, approved by the President, gave a formal appointment for the

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35 Strong, 159.
36 Stille, 80.
Commission, and selected nine men. The Plan of Organization, their founding document, added three more volunteer leaders, which resulted in a roster that included six physicians, two Army officers, and a nationally regarded financier. No "members" of the Commission serving on the board received a salary, but there was some "moderate sum in hand to facilitate their movements." George Templeton Strong, the financier who served as treasurer, left us a remarkable diary of his daily interactions from the age of 15. His Civil War entries provide a ground-level view of the Commission leadership and its nearly weekly meetings for the four years of the conflict. According to Strong, on June 21, 1861, Frederick Law Olmsted joined the Commission, as Secretary-General, and thereby became its penultimate administrator. Based on his masterful work organizing and managing a vast workforce to construct New York City’s Central Park, Olmsted set to work to develop the infrastructure of the Commission. He took a leave of absence from the Central Park project to do this work. In his two years of tenure, he set in motion a highly refined hiring process, created a responsive organization, installed a professional tone, and instilled a proactive attitude, all of which remained with the Commission throughout its existence.

Despite the genuine attempts by the board and Olmsted to work smoothly with the Army’s Medical Division, the Commission’s initial concerns about sanitation were taken by the Army as prima facie evidence of mistrust and lack of respect. It took considerable time, significant energy, and continuous demonstrations of the Commission’s competent and inventive efforts for the Army brass and the physicians to recognize and appreciate this lifesaving work. Eventually, they did. Another area of interaction that dogged the Commission concerned the powerful effect that regional preferences played in the general public’s responses to the war

37 Stille, 537.
38 Rybczynski, 199.
effort and the actions of the Commission. In the early months of the hostilities, there was a vast and spontaneous outpouring of support for the troops, and it took the form of individuals, families, and groups mailing and shipping every imaginable item of food and personal comfort in the hopes of helping their men in the Army. Unfortunately, food items arrived broken, spoiled, and unusable, and most of it ended up in massive stockpiles, with the Postal Service and the Army unable to deal effectively with it. Once the problem was detected, Olmsted, his staff, and network of volunteers quickly and widely communicated the importance of sending only items on an approved list of necessities and sending them to designated locations. In coordination with this, Olmsted swiftly established a regional approach to the collection and distribution of supplies, setting up depots throughout the Union, in the cities of New York, Boston, Philadelphia, Washington, Cincinnati, and Wheeling.\(^{39}\) They hoped that by publicizing the location of these depots, the Ladies Aid Societies and any individuals, sending supplies, would find their efforts successful and not wasted.

Olmsted and the board knew that the men and women on the home front felt a strong connection to the volunteers from their region. Usually, the connection was stronger than with the Union Army at large. Over the four years of its active life, the Commission’s efforts to create a more efficient and systematic process were frequently criticized by those resistant to having their efforts combined. From the beginning, Bellows and the board made consistent and diligent effort to operate a system that provided improved healthcare and healing for the Army. This system allowed the government to focus on more pressing issues and logistical problems.

Because of the efforts of the Commission leadership, the coordination of Olmsted and his staff, and the network of Ladies Aid Societies, the problem of healthcare for soldiers was a major

\(^{39}\) Stille, p. 169.
task the military and the government did not have to face alone. The war, the depth of the reactions of the women, and the strength of the response by the Commission were all unfamiliar territory. A unique set of leaders and active followers were required to obtain the necessary outcomes. The next chapter will explore this set of individuals.
CHAPTER 3
THREE INDIVIDUALS AND THEIR EXPRESSIONS OF PHILANTHROPY

Anyone who examines the complex and nuanced story of a significant social activity usually finds that there are individuals who played vital roles in its establishment and maintenance. Whether one looks at the reach of the American bible societies of the early nineteenth century, the establishment of the American Red Cross, or the impact of the settlement houses in the U.S. in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, one usually finds a set of individuals responsible for the establishment and ongoing work, and upon whom the entire effort relied. Similar to these efforts, the Sanitary Commission is what we know today as a nonprofit organization.\(^{40}\) One way to study such an organization is to place a lens on the individuals involved, thus allowing us to observe and compare their activities, and to develop a greater understanding of how their pursuits served society. Charitable organizations in the United States have usually relied on three forms of revenue to fund their operations: government funding, receipts from charitable gifts, and the income derived from fees for services provided. The following analysis of the Commission looks closely at its sole funding source of charitable revenue, and actions to organize people and persuade potential contributors to donate charitable gifts. It also examines another form of charitable contributions: donated materials. Finally, the

\(^{40}\) Modern nonprofit charitable organizations are considered either a 501 c (3) or a 501 c (4), according to the U. S. Internal Revenue Service. Both are tax-exempt, but the c (4) is a nonprofit, which exists to serve the public. The c (3) is a nonprofit set up as a membership organization, such as a fraternity or club, which exists to serve its members. Both are mission-driven organizations not operating to generate a "profit" for distribution. The much larger number of recognized charitable organizations are c (4) nonprofits. These designations came into being following the passage of a series of U.S. tax laws between 1913 and 1918. https://www.irs.gov/charities-non-profits/charitable-organizations/exemption-requirements-501c3-organizations.
study includes two closely aligned charitably inspired activities in support of a nonprofit organization: donations of time and donations of leadership.

This chapter discusses three individuals in greater depth who played essential roles in the confluence of the Sanitary Commission, the Ladies Aid Societies, and the Sanitary Fairs. It will argue that their activities and mutual support demonstrated a set of archetypes for modern philanthropy. The three individuals below, and their activities, formed a triad of philanthropic support for nonprofits: volunteering, volunteer leadership, and charitable giving. Understanding the full historical impact of the Sanitary Commission's philanthropic activity requires an examination of all three of these forms of philanthropic support. The three noteworthy individuals played vital roles in establishing the precursor to the modern nonprofit practices of philanthropic support activities. Through their distinctive efforts, the three mutually supported and strengthened each other. Thereby, they established in the 1860s what we recognize today as the full range of philanthropic activities of nonprofit organizational life.

**Henry Whitney Bellows**

Henry Bellows was a prime mover in publicizing the intentions of the WCR and the Ladies Aid Societies of the North. He coupled those groups, and their intention to support and protect Union soldiers at risk, with the efforts of the Federal government and the military in its pursuit of war objectives. Bellows operated on the public stage of civic engagement and in the field of adult education, and these activities allowed him to promote public dialogue that sought solutions to contemporary issues. During his peak years, he was a widely respected orator and lyceum lecturer. Born in Boston in 1814, Bellows graduated from Harvard College and then from Harvard Divinity School. In 1839, he was appointed pastor of the First Congregational Church in New York City, one of the oldest and wealthiest in the city, where he remained active
until his death in 1882. He became widely recognized for his oration from the pulpit and his editorial work with the Christian Inquirer, a national Unitarian weekly newspaper. A close look at his sermons, bulletins, speeches, and Strong’s diary entries show the critical role he played in the Commission.\(^{41}\) As the primary thinker of the Commission, he coalesced the ideas, marshaled the forces, and guided the board. He recruited prominent individuals to become members of the founding group. It was Bellows who realized a direct appeal to the leaders of the Federal government was essential. He obtained letters of introduction that facilitated face-to-face meetings for the delegation he led to Washington. His role as president of the Commission was pivotal, providing its purpose and direction.

Bellows seems to have been a reflection of white urban and middle-class aspirations, narrowed and focused by his Unitarian theology. The core of Unitarian faith rejects the Christian holy trinity in favor of a monistic view of God and Jesus as a prophet, not as the Son of God. Relevant to Bellows, and his world view, Unitarian faith emphasizes that reason, rational thinking, as well as science and philosophy, can and do coexist with belief in God. It appears that because thinking and logic emerged in religious belief, just as democratic principles became central for the new American republic, made this an attractive theology for the era. His theology and his belief in the ascendancy of Western man appear to have driven his aspirations for social improvement and societal uplift. Bellows’ theology and social progress appear to have combined in his “calling” to lead the Commission.

His experience working in the public eye led Bellows to believe that positive public perceptions of the Commission were vital to corral Congress and harness the Army Medical

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Department. His writings and his behavior demonstrated that, for him, developing and maintaining the right public profile for the Commission was as important as any task they performed that served soldiers. Knowing about sanitation practices was not enough for Commission leaders to be ready for the task. It appears that Bellows insisted his colleagues be thought leaders and persuasive advocates who operated at the pinnacle of ethical practice. In recognition of this, Bellows selected individuals who supported contemporary sanitation, were careful about public perception, and who possessed the acumen and life experience that came from engagement with government bureaucracy. The public arena in which the formation of the Commission took place included a Federal government in turmoil and a doubtful populace confronting current events for which there was no North American precedent. Bellows and the Commission took on an enormous task during an uncertain time.

Most contemporary criticism of the Commission centered on its efforts to minimize waste and improve efficiency by centralizing the collection of funds and donated materials. The Commission operated with a sense of the importance of national cohesion, which often flew in the face of regional attachments. There is a critical voice in historical scholarship focused on an aspect of the Commission and some of its key players, such as Bellows. George M. Fredrickson described the Civil War's impact on literature, philosophy, and ideology, and, unlike some scholars, he avoided the war's economic and social aspects. Intending to map the changes in attitudes and direction of Northern intellectuals before and after the Civil War, Frederickson devoted a chapter to Bellows and his team. The author portrayed two camps, conservatives and reformers, with Bellows et al. as the conservatives. Fredrickson described the conservatives as

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having a deep concern that an ordered society, controlled by the elites using the power of church and state, was slipping away. They feared the country’s unbridled material expansion and the near explosion of reform movements.

The other group, the reformers, perceived the coming war as the long-awaited opportunity to rid the country of constraining forces from the past. In this light, the abolitionists take on a broader potential for impact than just advocating for the elimination of slavery. For our purposes, Frederickson's analysis of the conservative elements in the Commission offers another view of their larger impetus. Their motivation was grounded in their hope to use the war as an opportunity to educate the masses about the value of authority, discipline, and sacrifice.⁴⁴ In this way, Bellows' theological perspective, and his view of the role of aspiration for modern man, drove his perspective of the purpose of the enlightened helping the unenlightened. Even more critical, Frederickson asserted that as a result, the outcomes of the Commission's work led to a decrease in humanitarianism at the hand of an increase in impersonal efficiency.⁴⁵

Another scholarly view of Bellows comes from a social perspective that links his religious views and social aspirations. It places him centrally in what Clifford Clark dubs as the "genteel leadership reform movements" in the second half of the nineteenth century.⁴⁶ The author’s central point is that Bellows' career illustrates the tensions that played out between religious belief and the aspirations of these reformers for social change. Clark argues that Bellows believed in an “aristocracy of talent and virtue” and these individuals’ duty to provide leadership to society. What is challenging about this perception of duty is the implication that it is accessible only to those who have an excellent education and an income large enough for the

⁴⁴ Frederickson, 102.
⁴⁵ Frederickson, 111.
"enjoyment of cultivated tastes." According to Clark, Bellows, with a Harvard education, a comfortable salary, and inherited wealth, described himself as an agent of change. While the author’s focus goes well beyond the duration of the Commission, he zeros in on how its formation was the ideal arena for Bellows to “put to use his new ‘institutional’ social views.” Clark emphasizes that Bellows’ primary objectives were the promulgating of preventative policies that eliminated waste, eradicated incompetence, and enhanced medical services via the collection of statistics.

In the second half of the nineteenth century, a set of changes in the eleemosynary sector took place that can be, at least in part, attributed to the insights and direction that Bellows brought to his work with the Commission. Robert H. Bremner argues that charity reformers in the post-Civil War period identified the arrival of a new epoch. "What they hailed was the development of a more scientific spirit and method in philanthropy." The author describes the spread of this scientific approach, which he calls "philanthropology." He argues that the philanthropists and social reformers of this period gathered the dos and don’ts passed on by previous charity reformers and organized them into a system of rules. Bellows’ introduction of statistics into the methodological design of the Commission arguably makes his work one of the progenitors of this new approach. Kathleen D. McCarthy asserts that Civil War philanthropy fostered a shift to a more inclusive type of civil society. “The war also swept away many of the vestiges of patriarchal philanthropy, opening expanded opportunities for independent social action both by white women and African Americans.” She points to the scholarship of Lori Ginsberg, who depicted the war as a watershed separating older, gender-based alliances from the

47 Clark, 68.
48 Bremner, 86.
49 McCarthy, 200.
more class-based networks of associations of the Gilded Age. McCarthy places even more importance on what Paula Baker cites: many female reformers shifted rationale for their policymaking from moral authority to research for social science. While Bellows believed that his responsibility, as a member of the privileged class, to help others was certainly a view of moral authority, he also appreciated the value of scientific research.

Bellows performed well. His energy and dedication cannot be faulted, despite contemporary or modern critics. He exhibited some essential leadership qualities, without which it is unlikely that the Commission would have been nearly as successful. He provided firm but attentive leadership and offered his conduct as a role model for the other officers and members of the Commission. His leadership style relied on formality but was not without a measure of warmth. In terms of being an advocate and spokesperson for the Commission, he did not hold much in reserve. Bellows actively solicited charitable funds for the Commission, encouraged the other members to make charitable contributions, and to solicit others, as well. This level of dedication to a volunteer leadership position and his commitment to the goals of the Commission provides a starting point to compare him against what is known about nonprofit volunteer leaders today.

The literature on volunteer leadership is extensive, and a particular area of active interest focuses on a highly recognized form, service on a nonprofit board. There are numerous well-regarded sources, both academic and practically based, on what makes for a good volunteer leader, especially in the form of a board member. One representative source is the guide published by the National Center for Nonprofit Boards for trustees and Chief Executive Officers

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50 McCarthy, 201.
51 McCarthy, 201.
of nonprofits. Judith Grummon Nelson lists behaviors and capacities that can serve as criteria for a superior volunteer leader. These include such skills and characteristics as the ability to listen, analyze, and think, the willingness to prepare and complete tasks, as well as personal traits like honesty, tolerance, and patience.

While all of these are useful characteristics, they are sterile if not accompanied with passion for the cause, commitment to the agreed course of action, and advocacy for the organization. Nelson emphasizes that a balanced perspective is necessary to harness the energy and interests of leaders who are, after all, working without pay. “Laborers in the nonprofit vineyards know it takes enthusiasm, energy, good judgment, planning, creative ideas, focused work, and a sense of humor to develop – and keep regenerating – a well-orchestrated and productive board.”

It is clear from the materials discussed here that Bellows ranks rather high on most of Nelson’s eight items. The one area where Bellows might be somewhat lacking would be in that of tolerance. It could be that Frederickson’s criticism and Clark's comments about his concern for efficiency could extend to a lack of sufficient tolerance. According to this view, Bellows perceived that his position and knowledge meant that he knew better than the "lesser" people what it was they needed. For his attitudes and behavior overall, in his role as president of the Commission, Bellows offers us a useful and instructive archetype of a volunteer leader for what we know today as a nonprofit organization.

Mary A. Livermore

A crucial second individual for us to consider is Mary A. Livermore, born Mary A. Rice. Her position in the Commission was modest on paper, but her impact was not. Born in Boston in

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53 Nelson, 54.
1820, she became a schoolteacher after attending a female seminary. In 1839, she moved to Virginia to serve as a tutor on a plantation. Her two years of exposure to Southern aristocratic life seems to have moved her to become a confirmed abolitionist. Her marriage to Universalist minister Daniel Parker Livermore in 1845, and their subsequent move to Chicago in 1858, found her helping him to edit his Universalist journal. This activity led her into journalism. During the 1860 Republican Party convention, she was the only female reporter in attendance. Her participation put her in direct contact with the seminal political events of the time and exposed her to the soon to be elected Republican presidential candidate, Abraham Lincoln. In those desperate times, Livermore was drawn to work that supported the Northern cause, helped her to make sense of what was happening, and gave her an avenue of expression consistent with her beliefs. "As state after state rushed from the national constellation, it seemed to the states that remained faithful as if the nation were lapsing into chaos."  

Following the outbreak of hostilities, Livermore sought a place where her energies and passion were welcome: the growing network of the Sanitary Commission. Even while the soldiers gathered, the WRC and the countless local Ladies Aid Societies began work, Livermore was aware of the evolving and comprehensive organizing efforts of the Commission. “The methods of the Commission were so elastic, and so arranged to meet any emergency, that it was able to make provision for any need, seeking always to supplement, and never to supplant, the government.”  

She signed on as a volunteer in Chicago for what became four years of service with the Commission. Unlike the national leaders, such as Bellows, Strong, and Stille, who viewed their work from on high, Livermore served in various direct capacities throughout the Commission’s organizational structure. In the early period, she alternated between battlefield

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54 Livermore, vii.
55 Livermore, 129.
service and administrative activities in the Chicago office. From these experiences, Livermore gained a perspective that she carried throughout her life and portrayed in her two books, *My Story of the War: Civil War Memoirs* (1887) and *The Story of My Life* (1898). These wartime experiences formed the backbone of her lifelong support for women’s rights as she went on to become an early feminist, a noted lecturer, and a high profile social advocate. She experienced firsthand the inefficiencies and defects of the Federal government’s efforts and, in particular, the gaps in providing adequately for the soldiers. It fueled her commitment to do whatever she could as a volunteer for the Commission, to coordinate with the leadership in New York and with the administrative center in Washington, D.C. All this spurred her on to experiment and to innovate.

These qualities allowed her to advance in responsibilities and, eventually, she became along with Jane C. Hoge, co-director of the Northwestern Branch of the Commission, also based in Chicago. Livermore and her colleagues worked tirelessly at the never-ending tasks of assembling materials in their depot and directing them to the troops, ever on the move. It was through her efforts that supplies accurately reached battlefields in record time. “After the battle of Antietam, where ten thousand of our wounded were left on the field, besides a large number of the enemy, the Commission distributed 28,762 pieces of dry goods, shirts, towels, bed-ticks, pillows, etc.; 30 barrels of old linen, bandages, and lint; 3,188 pounds of farina; 2,620 pounds of condensed milk; 5,000 pounds of beefstock and canned meats; 3,000 bottles of wine and cordials; 4,000 sets of hospital clothing; several tons of lemons and other fruit; crackers, tea,

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58 L.P. Brockett, 444.
sugar, rubber cloth, tin cups, chloroform, opiates, surgical instruments and other hospital conveniences." She duplicated this accomplishment many times.

Receiving donated supplies put her in contact with the families of the fighting men. She described a continuous stream of notes and missives that seemed to accompany nearly every parcel that arrived at her depot. She read, absorbed, and contemplated these heartfelt sentiments of families sending the packages and goods. In this way, Livermore became an intermediary between the supporting families and the Commission’s work to protect and heal Union soldiers. The absorption of these sentiments and direct contact with soldiers in the field and hospital beds seemed to have given her a unique set of experiences. It may well have contributed directly to her ability to intuit that something was missing from the Commission activities.

Immersed in the Northwestern Branch, Livermore was privy to the general ebb and flow of financial support for the Commission and its organizational efforts. After two years of conflict, the national public had become decidedly war-weary, as was evident in the slowing down of the volume of materials arriving at the supply depots and the reduced flow of charitable gifts toward the Commission’s efforts. Aware of decreased contributions in her region and elsewhere, Livermore discussed this problem with Hoge. "The visits of Mrs. Livermore and myself to the army had convinced us, not only of the value of sanitary relief to the sick in hospitals but of the necessity of large accessions of money and supplies to meet the increased demands of our suffering army." After considerable reflection, she and Hoge made a bold proposal. They asked the Commission leadership’s permission to organize and conduct a grand

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59 Livermore, My Story of the War, 132.
60 Livermore, My Story of the War, 136.
61 Livermore, My Story of the War, 410.
62 Hoge, 332.
fair in Chicago in the name of the Sanitary Commission and to honor the fighting men. Relying on her highly tuned social skills, the strength of her team’s expertise, and the extensive network they had built up throughout the region, Livermore believed that their Branch could recruit a regiment of volunteers to create a massive event with something for everyone. She believed that such a fair would raise the spirits of families and the general public.63

The Commission was skeptical when Livermore and Hoge proposed they could raise $25,000 (equal to $400,000 in today’s money), but it reluctantly permitted Livermore to proceed. The Great Northwestern Sanitary Fair raised more than $85,000 ($1,360,000 today) and provided a significant boost to public morale of an even higher value. Their achievement not only shocked the Commission leadership, but it also surprised, delighted, and stirred up Ladies Aid Societies throughout the Union. Livermore and Hoge tapped into the longings of families to engage as a community, in a patriotic setting, to support the cause and do something tangible. While Livermore, as the supreme networker enlivened and empowered others in shared goals, she functioned at the most basic level of Commission services. Her experience contrasted with that of a volunteer leader like President of the Board Bellows or Treasurer Strong. Whereas they took responsibility for giving direction and shape to the organization, Livermore worked on the ground floor, with her sleeves rolled up, provided direct service, made direct contact with soldiers, and moved the supplies to the field.64

Livermore’s involvement with the Sanitary Commission as an active volunteer took place in the context of American women acting as citizens as a part of the development of the United States. Anne Firor Scott details how the pathway of women in civic engagement was through associations. “In retrospect it is clear that such women, constrained by law and custom, and

63 Livermore, My Story of the War, 411.
64 Hoge, 95.
denied access to most of the major institutions by which the society governed itself and created its culture, used voluntary associations to evade some of these constraints and to redefine a ‘woman’s place’ by giving the concept a public dimension.”\(^{65}\) Tracing the growth of women's activities from the early days of the Republic, Scott pinpoints two social consequences that lay at the heart of American political and social development. First, experiences in small-scale voluntary associations prepared women for political participation and, by finding a way to take up public concerns, they contributed to the expansion of American democracy. Second, for some women working together helped them tap into creativity otherwise constrained in domestic life. This dormant inventiveness can sometimes be accessible by exposure to a broader range of social experiences. The author reminds us that while some kinds of self-discovery occur in quiet introspection, other opportunities for self-discovery come with the experience and support of others.\(^{66}\)

Livermore’s impact on social advocacy and charitable activity continued well beyond the Civil War. Here, too, she became an opinion leader and a role model. “Mary Livermore became a prominent figure in the suffrage movement, serving as vice president of the American Women’s Suffrage Association, and editor of the *Woman’s Journal*, the association’s newspaper.”\(^{67}\) Nina Silber asserts that Livermore, in her work as an author, continued to serve as an example to women on how to be more fully engaged in life. “As Livermore observed, by the late nineteenth century, American culture stood awash in Civil War memories, but they were mainly the memories of men’s accomplishments and sacrifices, of the great ‘Battles and Leaders’

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\(^{66}\) Scott, 2.

\(^{67}\) McCarthy, 201.
as one magazine series was titled – of the 1860s.” Silber argues that women's participation in connection with the Civil War was complex and nuanced. She points out how Northern women were compared unfavorably with their Southern counterparts. One proponent of this view was troubled by what she perceived as the North's lackluster patriotism. In her essay "Courage! A Tract for the Times," she "chastised able-bodied men and women, who have not as yet, made a single sacrifice of personal comfort for the war….” Silber argues that the conditions of the War and the interactions with the Yankee women required them to take on new challenges and to assume greater autonomy. “Thus the war did bring Northern women more firmly into the civic sphere and into a more individualized relationship with the Federal government and the nation-state.”

Both Scott and Silber thus describe the environment of Livermore's choices. Rather than be content as the conventional woman in middle-class life, she sought an active life as a volunteer working in collaboration with other women that provided meaningful support for the War and the men fighting it. It is particularly noteworthy that Livermore's creative ideas regarding the Sanitary Fairs emerged, as Scott has suggested, as a result of broader social experiences and with the feedback of other volunteers. Livermore was a creative force that found her expression in collaboration with other volunteers. Through the Ladies Aid Societies, she helped unleash the collaborative efforts of many others moving forward to the end of the nineteenth century, and well into the twentieth.

To consider Livermore as a model volunteer requires viewing her activities in the context of modern volunteering with nonprofit organizations. As with the topic of volunteer leadership

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68 Nina Silber, Daughters of the Union: Northern Women Fight the Civil War (Cambridge: Harvard University, 2005), 275.
69 Silber, 2.
70 Silber, 9.
and board service, there is a considerable literature for the nonprofit staff members who are
responsible for the recruitment, guidance, motivation, and evaluation of individuals volunteering
for their organizations.71 Susan J. Ellis, who led the organization, Energize, for 40 years,
provides some critical thoughts by which to consider Livermore and her engagement with the
Sanitary Commission.72 Ellis suggests that high performing volunteers are dependable,
understand the dependent nature of their role, are clear who is in charge, operate fluidly with
issues of confidentiality, recognize the importance of organizational policies, strive for
professionalism, maintain a warm and positive demeanor, and perform using a problem-solving
attitude. These are high standards; ones that many employers would like to have from their
employees. There is no question that Mary Livermore more than met these standards. In her
role as a volunteer, she not only followed proper protocol and strived daily to support the goals
of the Commission, she also poured her boundless enthusiasm for the cause into nearly every
task. Given her dedication, her passion, and her performance, Livermore can be put forward as
another archetype of philanthropic activity, that of the active nonprofit volunteer. It is hard to
imagine a better example of a volunteer for contemporary nonprofit organizations.

Frederick Law Olmsted

The third individual for us to consider, and someone key to the formation and direction of
the Sanitary Commission, is known more widely for activities in another field of endeavor.

Frederick Law Olmsted was born in Connecticut in 1822 and led a varied life starting first as a

71 John M Bridgeland, Heart of the Nation: Volunteering and America’s Civic Spirit (Lanham, MD:
Strategies for Success (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 2011); James C. Fisher and Kathleen H. Cole,
Leadership and Management of Volunteer Programs: A Guide for Volunteer Administrators (San
Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1993); Mark A. Musick and John Wilson, Volunteers: A Social Profile
(Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007); Brian Yeager, Volunteer Management for Non-Profit
Organizations: The Art of People Management (Virginia Beach: Create Space, 2017).
72 https://www.energizeinc.com/
farmer, then becoming a writer, and eventually, making his mark as a designer and creator of vast and trendsetting landscapes. He is recognized by the general public today for his work with high profile municipal and state parks in New York and throughout North America. Many view him as the “father” of American landscape architecture. While he expressed his longings to shape the world around him as a man cultivating the soil, he first came to public notice as a journalist observing the world and as a published author. His journey in search of parks, a new kind of landscape in the world, was published as Walks and Talks of an American Farmer in England in 1852. Olmsted then secured the backing of the New York Daily News, later to become the New York Times, and between 1852 and 1857, he toured the South and wrote articles based on his observations about the South and its economy. These articles came out in three volumes: Journey in the Seaboard Slave States (1856), A Journey Through Texas (1857), and A Journey in the Back Country in the Winter of 1853-4 (1860).

Olmsted’s life as a landscape architect formed as the professional field itself was being born. Before his career designing parks, there was no professional category known as a landscape architect. As the hostilities of the Civil War commenced, Olmsted was nationally known for his books. By the time that Bellows and the board wrote the founding documents, Olmsted was well into the project for which he subsequently is most remembered, Central Park. He and his design partner, Calvert Vaux, were awarded the design contract in 1858. The original concept, to be a park for the people of New York, was proposed some years before by

73 Rybczynski, 394.
76 Rybczynski, 71.
Andrew Jackson Downing, the noted horticulturalist. It appears that Olmsted’s vision and scale for the park construction are what caught the eye of Bellows and the board. With some 5 million cubic yards of soil and rocks required for removal and with 8,500 cubic yards of topsoil brought in, this was a construction project on a massive scale that required extensive management and comprehensive organization of people. At the height of the project, Olmsted managed more than 700 workers to accomplish all the design elements. Bellows and the board were already familiar with Olmsted, as he was on the board of the WCR. They knew that to create an organization like the Sanitary Commission and to manage its far-flung operations, they needed the skills and experience of a master organizer. Olmsted became the top administrator, the Secretary-General, and his efforts during its first two years set the tone for the Commission.

The timeline of the activity of the Commission is divisible into two distinct periods: the two years with Olmsted in office and the two years after he departed. Between his hiring in June 1861 and his departure on September 1, 1863, Olmsted applied his remarkable skills of organization. He created not only a structure but also policies and procedures that he rolled out with a virtual whirlwind of activity. In the beginning months, it was a hectic pace because it all had to happen at once. His list of accomplishments began with locating, selecting, and training staff with the requisite medical knowledge. He helped create a nimble and flexible organization, able to deal with new and unexpected developments. When the transportation of wounded and ill soldiers to hospitals became problematic, Olmsted created something new, hospital transport ships. When a significant battle shaped up (the Peninsular Campaign), and

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getting supplies to the Army became difficult, Olmsted created mobile services able to move closer to the conflict.\textsuperscript{78}

Soon after coming on board, he established a division of the Commission solely to inspect Army bases and installations. He began with a team of 20 sanitary inspectors, all university-educated medical men. To one, he described his duties: "The visitation of regimental camps, the object, and method of which you will find indicated in a proof-sheet of instructions enclosed. These instructions are imperfect and incomplete, but your own judgment will supply their deficiency. It is only necessary to say that the main object is not to obtain a record but to facilitate and ensure the giving of instruction and advice where needed."\textsuperscript{79} Inspectors had a checklist of 180 items concerning “drinking water, rations, discipline, mortality, sickness, hospital accommodations, and so on."\textsuperscript{80} All during the war, the Commission representatives conducted camp inspections.

The materials needed by the Commission were nearly all supplied with donated goods, much of it coming from the more than 200 networks of Ladies Aid Societies that connected some 7000 local groups. While Olmsted was in close physical proximity to the War Department in Washington, D.C., he nevertheless worked very closely with the board, based in New York City. The board minutes and Strong’s diary detailed Olmsted’s presentations, updates, reports, correspondence, and written requests. His superb organizational skills pushed the Commission’s activities to enact what Bellows and his colleagues had envisioned. As Bellows articulated the mission and general policies, Olmsted created the systems, developed the procedures, and enacted operational details that made everything highly functional. As the administrative heart

\textsuperscript{78} Humphreys, 124.  
\textsuperscript{79} Rynczynski, 203.  
\textsuperscript{80} Rynczynski, 203.
of the organization, Olmsted supported the conceptual “head” of Bellows and his volunteer leader colleagues. For example, the board recognized the limitations of the Army's initial policy to house the wounded in buildings converted into hospitals. Olmsted researched Florence Nightingale’s efforts in the Crimea and the United Kingdom, and their efforts to design specially built hospitals with enough light and air circulation to promote healing. The result was the introduction by the Commission of a new kind of hospital construction, the pavilion design, which became the standard method for the placement of wounded and ill Union soldiers during the conflict.81

Like the Commission at large, Olmsted’s work and communication style also engendered some criticism. He was used to being in charge and directing his subordinates, but to those outside the organization, he sometimes appeared arrogant or snobbish. Olmsted was not known for suffering fools gladly. His goal orientated approach and his drive to solve problems, be they logistical issues, unwieldy municipalities, or unresponsive bureaucrats, sometimes ran roughshod over "tender toes." Olmsted drove himself hard to respond to the immediate needs of the work, and he set a pace in the Commission headquarters that few could follow. As the board had hoped, he became the ultimate problem solver and, for that reason, was appreciated widely by contemporaries and recognized by modern scholars. “The Commission was unusually fortunate in having as its first secretary-general the energetic Frederick Law Olmsted.”82 Fredrickson acknowledged his organizational gifts but was somewhat critical of his social insensitivity. “His famous travel writings about the South had little in common with abolitionist attempts to portray the suffering of the slaves. The hardheaded Olmsted had concerned himself less with the

81 Humphreys, 43.
82 Bremner, American Philanthropy, 77.
inhumanity of slavery than with its apparent unprofitability.”  The author argues that this attitude of insensitivity was part of Olmsted's behavior at the Commission. "Frederick Law Olmsted's sanitary report on the First Battle of Bull Run, for example, laid greater emphasis on purely disciplinary problems than on the questions clearly involving sanitary care of the wounded.”

Because Olmsted performed as the public face of the Commission, it influences which modern nonprofit staff position might be appropriate to consider as a means of comparison for him. Olmsted's role as the chief administrator meant that he was responsible for the management of the flow of charitable gifts and donated resources. He accomplished this by organizing and directing the flow of money and materials and by communicating with the Ladies Aid Societies about the money and materials. It makes sense to use the job of the administrator as a means of comparison for Olmsted. While not explicitly hired to raise charitable gift money, he was perceived in the world, as the primary staff person of the Sanitary Commission.

How nonprofit organizations raised charitable revenue in the years following the Sanitary Commission has received its share of scholarly interest. Scott M. Cutlip frames the changes into two phases: what happened before 1900 and what happened after 1900. “The private social service which looms so large today laid most of its foundation stone in those thirty years between the close of the Civil War and the Spanish-American War.”  The author points to the period of 1900 to 1907, what he calls the movement from wholesale to retail philanthropy. Of particular interest for considering Olmsted, and his two colleagues, Bellows and Livermore, is whom

83 Frederickson, 104.
Cutlip identifies as the inheritors of the legacy of the Sanitary Commission innovations. The author pinpoints two men who changed the history of fundraising methods: Charles Summer Ward and Lyman L. Pierce, who developed new strategies in the YMCA movement in the years leading up to 1907. They were instrumental in adapting the practices of the late nineteenth century, which had not developed much beyond the level achieved by Bellows, Livermore, and Olmsted. From their extensive work raising money for individual YMCA buildings in locations around the United States, Ward and Pierce advanced a set of specific practices all based on their acquired knowledge of philanthropic activity, their appreciation of volunteer strengths and foibles, and the application of judicious use of volunteer leaders. “The collaboration of Ward and Pierce produced the modern fund-raising campaign techniques: careful organization, picked volunteers spurred on by team competition, prestige leaders, powerful publicity, a large gift to be matched by the public’s donations, careful records, report meetings, and a definite time limit.”

What is commonly recognized today as the nonprofit capital campaign, used by countless charitable nonprofit organizations to raise charitable funds for the construction or renovation of buildings, is based on the work of Ward and Pierce. The argument here is that what Olmsted achieved with the Sanitary Commission, with the support of Livermore and Bellows, laid the groundwork for what Ward and Pierce “discovered” and put in place for nonprofit organizations. Of the eight ingredients in Ward and Pierce’s formula, at least six of them were evident in the Commission, Societies, and Fairs.

There are considerable current materials on the responsibility of staff members in nonprofits for developing and maintaining a flow of charitable revenue, be it as a fund development officer or as the executive director. In the case of larger nonprofits, the top

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86 Cutlip, 44.
administrator position would be the Chief Executive Officer. In the best practices view of nonprofit organizations, it is understood that the job description of the top administrative person includes responsibility for fundraising, whether or not it delegated to a fund development officer. "If you're not willing to raise money, you shouldn't be in the CEO position. It's part and parcel of the job."^87 Two leading philanthropic fundraisers, both recognized for their educational and publishing efforts aimed at increasing the knowledge within the profession, are James Greenfield and Simone Joyaux. When discussing fundraising regarding the fund development staff person, the executive director or the C.E.O., Greenfield points to the critical attributes of "thought, planning, management, judgment and time."^88 The author posits that topflight management of a nonprofit organization striving to maintain donor trust has surprisingly little to do with asking for money. Asking for money, Greenfield points out, certainly takes place but is only a small part of the task. Instead, for those responsible, the task is focused on creating the conditions that offer highly interested supporters an opportunity to change the world in ways that are personally meaningful to them as donors. Joyaux points to the importance of instilling and nurturing a culture of philanthropy. "Organizations that operate with a culture of philanthropy understand three things: the value of organizational culture, the importance of philanthropy, and the inextricable link between philanthropy and fund development."^89 She stresses that philanthropy needs to be part of the rootstock of the organization, not added later.

As the Secretary-General, Olmsted emphasized smooth and effective operations, the ideal expression of administering a well-run nonprofit organization. Charitable contributors are attracted to organizations that command their trust. The things that most build trust with

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prospective charitable contributors are predictability, excellent follow-through, and high clarity of purpose. In this way, Olmsted not only performed superbly as the top organizer, but he also helped to create an organization that expressed a high level of attraction to those drawn to the mission of the organization. Furthermore, with Bellows and the board deciding early on to rely on gift money, they ensured that acceptance of philanthropy was there from the start. Olmsted built on this by his consistency, his immediacy of service, and his record of inventiveness. He has provided for our purposes the third archetype, the administrator for charitable giving.

Three Trendsetters Taken Together

These three philanthropic trendsetters, Bellows, Livermore, and Olmsted and their involvement with the Sanitary Commission, and its network, are noteworthy not only for their achievements but also for how their activities created a mutual support structure for their combined work. Viewed collectively, they propelled and intensified the activities of their colleagues, which resulted in the performance of the three parts being much greater than the sum of its parts. Bellows and the board deserve credit for the breadth of their vision and insights on how best to frame the work of the Commission. However, without the organizational genius of Olmsted, they would have been merely a group of figureheads with some good ideas. The same is true for Olmsted and his penchant for solving problems and quickly redesigning systems to respond to new conditions. Without the solidity and commitment of men like Bellows and Strong, he would not have had the framework within which to perform his organizational magic. Livermore's situation was similar. She needed what Olmsted and Bellows provided to link noncombatants to the goals of the Commission. Without their support, and the organizational structure that came with it, Livermore would not have been nearly as successful in changing the narrative for noncombatant participation. She harnessed the power of longing on the part of
noncombatants and combined it with the vision of Bellows and the organizational impulse of Olmsted to make the first Sanitary Fair an enormous success. It was the mutual support and collaboration of the three individuals that made possible the momentum of nearly two-dozen Sanitary Fairs throughout the major cities of the North between 1863 and 1865.

The second half of the nineteenth century was a period for the United States of considerable change, significant demographic shifts, and technological upheaval. Within the volunteer association and charitable activities context, the work of Livermore, Olmsted, and Bellows created new openings and new pathways for social activists, civic citizens, and societal change agents. One of the places where this was observable was as part of the motive force behind the settlement house and public health movements, both of which emerged in Northern cities in response to the enormous increase in immigration and internal migration between 1890 and 1910.90 The Sanitary Commission's success in providing civilian engagement in a vast health arena did not go unnoticed by activists like Lilian Wald in New York and Jane Addams in Chicago. These two were examples of organization builders who built on the earlier advocacy efforts of women and, like Livermore, aimed toward making a difference in the world.

Addams became inspired by her visit to Toynbee Hall in London, founded in 1884 by Henrietta and Samuel Barnett, which attracted notice for its work to bring the social classes closer together in an attempt to eventually build a world without poverty.91 Addams rejected the expected pathway of marriage and instead chose full-time work in voluntary associations. A vital element of the success of her project, Hull House, was her success in obtaining private charitable funding. While Addams used her inheritance to get her project started, she forged

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strong relationships with wealthy women who provided the bulk of her funding.\textsuperscript{92} Lilian Ward also trod a different path. Having been trained as a nurse, she felt that working in a traditional hospital setting was an inadequate response to the unaddressed health issues she witnessed in New York City tenements. She strongly felt that healthcare should be accessible for the people who needed it most, the poorest citizens. Her advocacy for healthcare for the poor attracted the support and attention of wealthy supporters, and, as a result, her hugely successful work with the Henry Street project receives credit with starting the public health movement in the United States.\textsuperscript{93} The level of private support for the Commission, via the Societies and Fairs, offered for those that followed a model that private support was an appropriate mechanism to help fund public issues.

Providing private relief to citizens caught up in a natural disaster became a significant and ongoing American activity, including the extensive involvement of volunteers, as a result of the advocacy and energy of Clara Barton. During the Civil War, Barton worked as a nurse, providing succor and care for the battlefield wounded as a private citizen. To recuperate from her exhaustion at war's end, she traveled to Europe and there encountered the new work of Henri Durant and the International Red Cross.\textsuperscript{94} Upon returning to the United States, she began a lengthy effort with lecture tours and advocacy with politicians, with the hope of stirring enough interest to encourage the ratification of the Geneva Convention and the founding of a Red Cross Society for America. A set of international agreements on the treatment of wounded soldiers was a potent topic, but it required political will to achieve it. Unlike her solo work as a nurse,

she discovered that building public support required a team of advocates. As a result, she ensured the founding of the American Red Cross (ARC) in 1881, and the United States signed the Geneva Treaty three years later. While she was successful in both undertakings, her unwillingness to accept criticism, or share control of the ARC, caused her ouster in 1904. We can view Barton's continued exposure during the Civil War to the Commission's massive scale support for disastrous battlefield consequences as likely to have awakened her commitment to equip Americans for facing natural disasters.

In order to fully appreciate the role that each of three key individuals, Bellows, Livermore, and Olmsted, played in supporting each other, and in creating a set of nonprofit archetypes, it is necessary to examine in greater depth the Ladies Aid Societies and the Sanitary Fairs.
CHAPTER 4
LADIES AID SOCIETIES AND THEIR SANITARY FAIRS

The intensity of Northern women's concern about the risk of harm to their men at war helped bring about the establishment of the Sanitary Commission. It is essential to understand these women, and other noncombatants, within the context of this period, concerning what motivated them and the pathways available to pursue those motivations. This chapter will examine the two social structures that women, and other noncombatants, created to help support the work of the Commission. These included the thousands of Ladies Aid Societies, which became the focus of local efforts, and the nearly two dozen Sanitary Fairs that these groups organized, which were significant regional events aimed at gathering public support and resources for the Commission.

Ladies Aid Societies and Social Engagement

Because they recognized the urgency, their readiness to focus on the issues, and their willingness to provide an outlet for concerned citizens, women became a crucial part of initiating and supporting the Sanitary Commission and its related activities. Nowhere can these qualities be seen with greater clarity than in the plethora of Ladies Aid Societies that formed throughout the Northern states during the war. Ostensibly, they formed to help support the men engaged in the great conflict. It appears that these local organizations also fulfilled a common need of many women to find sisterly comfort to better deal with the chaos caused by the war and the enormous personal stress in their lives. "Women there were in this war who without a single relative in the army, denied themselves for the whole four years, the comforts to which they had always been accustomed; went thinly clad, took the extra blanket from their bed, never tasted tea, or sugar or flesh, that they might wind another bandage around some unknown soldier's wound, or give
some parched lips in the hospital another sip of wine.”95 There is considerable documentary
evidence about the various activities of these local Societies. Unfortunately, there is not an
accurate accounting of how many of these societies functioned during the Civil War. Anne Firor
Scott, as a result of her extensive research on women’s associations in U. S. history, believes that
there were somewhere between 7,000 and 20,000 of these local groups. What we know is there
was an outpouring of longing and action in practically every village, town, and city in the North.
In Chapter 2, we saw how the WCR helped jumpstart the involvement of Henry Bellows and
eventually helped propel him to form the Sanitary Commission. “While Bellows and Harris
were trying to convince the administration of the need for civilian involvement in the care of the
army, women all over the country continued to organize themselves without waiting for official
guidance.”96 This activity was grassroots work; women told other women what they were
seeking, how they were doing it, and, as a result, inspired still others to join in; or, if no group
yet existed near them, they formed one. They shared ideas and experiences, answered each
other’s questions, helped each other, and, thereby, provided life-sustaining help to their boys and
men away from home.

As discussed in Chapter 2, women in the United States in the nineteenth century were
greatly restricted in activities otherwise freely available to men. Groups of women in the United
States voiced their social and cultural concerns and found opportunities to express ideas about
improving society around them. The line between a group that met for social reasons and one
imbued with outwardly directed goals was thin. Alexis de Tocqueville devoted an entire chapter,
“On the Use to Which Americans Make of Associations in Civil Life,” in his Democracy in

95 Brockett, 6.
96 Scott, 65.
America, in which he described how United States citizens were not willing to wait for the government to solve their cultural or social problems. "Americans of all ages, all stations in life, and all types of dispositions are forever forming associations. They are not only commercial and industrial associations in which all take part but others of a thousand different types – religious, moral, serious, futile, very general and very limited, immensely large and very minute. Americans combine to give fetes, found seminaries, build churches, distribute books, and send missionaries to the antipodes. Hospitals, prisons, and schools take shape in that way."\(^{97}\)

Forming a local woman’s group for charitable purposes was one of the ways, accepted by both sexes, where women could act benevolently, in concert with others, without running afoul of society’s rules for acceptable conduct of women outside the home. As the demographics in the middle nineteenth century shifted from employment in agriculture, the percentage of domiciles in and around urban areas increased, and opportunities for women to engage with other women likely also increased. “Manufactures and commerce, then, come in to supply the means of subsistence to an excess of inhabitants beyond what the ordinary cultivation of the soil can sustain.”\(^{98}\) The 1860 U.S. Census showed a 34% increase in the population over that of 1850. More people in the same geography put more eyes on the social and cultural issues women perceived.

Women knew that their men, off in volunteer regiments, were without the domestic support that was so much a part of their regular lives. As a result, women gathered in parlors, libraries, schools, and other venues to gather and provide items that promoted comfort and

increased health for the fighting men. It also became an opportunity for them to glean information about the progress of the fighting. "Thousands of women experienced the same thirst for information, the same reliance on neighborhood networks, and the same urge to participate in the civic response to the war."99 Ladies Aid Societies, sometimes called Soldiers Aid Societies, formed whenever women were already active and aware of the power of their cooperative energies. The focus on personal and societal improvement shifted, as women came to give nearly full attention to working collectively to provide useful aids for the men serving their country. The swiftness of the response of women is impressive. "On April 20, 1861 – five days after Lincoln called for seventy-five thousand volunteers – Chapin Hall (Cleveland) was filled to overflowing with women, eager for concrete opportunity to take part in the great wave of patriotic enthusiasm aroused by the firing on Fort Sumter."100

Creating material for bandages was high on the list of necessities, and women, individually and collectively, scraped old linen cloth to create them. It appears that the soldiers could not have too much lint and bandages. “They prepared clothing, hospital paraphernalia, bedding, foodstuffs, and countless other items Union soldiers required, in sickness and in health.”101 The women’s domain, domestic arts, became a primary source of expression and the basis for practical help for their soldiers. Some Societies focused on making quilts, for example, as this was not only a creative outlet for women, but it also provided a useful item replete with home-like comfort for the men. "In January 1864, the Ladies' Aid Association of Weldon (PA) learned that the Sanitary Commission wanted quilts for sick and wounded soldiers and

100 Scott, 59.
101 Silber, 163.
immediately took action. They arranged for a grand ‘quilting bee,’ where members would gather in one large room to sew quilts. They decided to bring their meals with them, in order to lose no time by returning home.” These twenty-five quilters finished twenty quilts in short order.¹⁰² All told, Societies sent approximately 250,000 quilts to soldiers, and an untold number of them became burial cloths.

The flow of communication between the 7,000 women's groups was anything but unified; it was slow and intermittent. Similarly, since the flow of letters between the women back home and their soldiers were erratic, they were highly prized. "When Elizabeth Livermore (no relation to Mary Livermore) attended her Aid Society meetings in Milford, New Hampshire, she would often read from letters she had received, particularly from acquaintances who lived closer to the seat of war."¹⁰³ Any responses that gave women feedback on what they had sent to camps or that proved to be useful, was shared, and passed along to others. Occasionally, the impact of the work of one of these Societies got reported directly back to the group. The ladies of the Soldiers' Relief Society of Watkins, New York heard from Clara Barton, stationed in Fredericksburg with the troops, about how soldiers used their comfort items. “Every piece (sic) and particle (has) been given little by little to our poor suffering troops before Fredericksburg. I have more than once watched the trickling tears as they were received, and blessed you in my heart for the kindness which prompted your noble deeds.”¹⁰⁴

While gathered in small groups in homes or elsewhere, engaged in sewing garments or packing goods, the desire for human interaction among the women was part of every parcel prepared for shipment. “When sadness and tragedy so often filled daily life during the war, ¹⁰² Seidman, 68.
¹⁰³ Silber, 169.
¹⁰⁴ Donald C. Pfanz, Clara Barton’s Civil War: Between Bullet and Hospital (Yardley, PA: Westholme Publishing, 2018), 41.
cheerful sociability became immensely important to those trying to survive.”¹⁰⁵ In addition to the quiet, diligent work, women also were aware that others in their local communities had social interaction needs of their own. By creating social gatherings beyond their membership, local noncombatants could interact with others in their community, expand their experiences, and lighten the load of the war. Long before thoughts of the first Sanitary Fair arose for Mary Livermore, these groups planned and conducted a parade of teas, suppers, banquets, and social events of every description. Mention of them is widespread in writings of the time: in newspapers, personal journals, correspondence, and diaries.

Civil War Era Communications

Concurrent with the unexpected shifts in American political structure and military engagement with battle lines forming and reforming, changes also occurred in public communication methods. These modifications, a combination of technological and human interaction, converged and became visible in the reporting of daily news of the Civil War or, as it became known within the Union, the War of the Rebellion. Three technological innovations had an accumulative effect. First was the invention and widespread use of the electrical telegraph, which after a slow period of adoption and struggle between the inventor, government, and commercial interests, settled out as a commercially controlled communication medium. Second, and closely involved with the telegraph, was the creation and acceptance of the telegraph code, stemming from the work of another set of inventors, the survivor of which we know today as the Morse code. Because it was a method of use, and not a commercial product, the period of its acceptance was shorter than that of the telegraph. The third technological advance was the laying of the cable on the bed of the Atlantic Ocean, first achieved in 1858, which made it possible to

¹⁰⁵ Seidman, 68.
send telegraphic messages, by Morse code, between the United States and the United Kingdom. While the first cable only lasted a few weeks, its achievement in the minds of the public far outpaced its practical use. Later cables proved durable.106 The combination of these three resulted in the transmission of fast-paced information, regionally as well as internationally.

At the same time, the role of newspapers had changed notably in the 1840s, and significantly by the start of the hostilities. "In the 1850s, American newspapers employed a few paid correspondents and writers, but it was during the Civil War that newspaper reporting dramatically came of age."107 The style and purpose of newspapers and their reporting began to change as well. “Newspapers began to shift from a limited local focus to coverage of a broader scene.”108 In particular, the New York Herald and the New York Tribune became strong competitors as national newspapers. “The Herald and the Tribune were not the only innovative newspapers in the nation, but their efforts were representative, and their influence was transcendent.”109 News from Europe, via the intermittent cable access, helped to validate, in the minds of readers, these competitors as authentic national papers. Stemming from their time in reporting news from outside the United States, particularly with the conflict of the Mexican-American War of 1846-1848, newspapers began to utilize news correspondents. Combined with the power of the telegraph, and its use of the Morse code, newspapers were offering the reading public an enlarged panorama of national and international news delivered at a remarkable

108 Brayton Harris, Blue, and Gray in Black and White: Newspapers in the Civil War (author published, 2010), 5.
109 Brayton, Blue and Gray, 5.
speed. The combination of the increased reach of newspapers in gathering news and the pace of news updates also resulted in structural changes in the business of newsgathering. Where once the transmission of news via a single telegraph line became alternately clogged or tied up by one newspaper representative after another, newspapers banded together to “associate.” While this was not a technological advance, it was a sophisticated system based on agreements and cooperation. It reduced costs for the newspapers, shared access to the telegraph, and gave birth to the Associated News of New York. As a result, access to detailed, frequent, and nearly up to date news about the conflict saturated public life.

The intensity of the struggle and the accelerated news reports likely made for some news overkill for parts of the general public. Not knowing when the conflict would end would have weighed heavily on the nation. No group bore this burden more than the families of the soldiers, and, unlike conflicts in our modern era, nearly every family had a man, or two, bearing arms in harm's way. While the telegraph enabled news correspondents at the front to provide details and colorful commentary for their daily newspapers, the families back home had to rely on letters to know if their loved ones were safe. The speed and the arrival of letters were not predictable. So, if a big battle occurred with details in the newspapers and a family member's regiment was known to be included, it became a matter of waiting for the list of the dead to be printed in the newspapers. Even if a loved one's name did not appear, there was no way to know if the list was accurate or complete. The tension was very high for families with soldiers. The opportunity to do something for the war effort, however small, must have been compelling. Hence, it is easy to

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111 Czitrom, 15-17.
understand why a large number of women and noncombatant men volunteered to engage in Ladies Aid Society activities, especially the Sanitary Fairs.

Civil War newspapers did much more than inform anxious families and fighting men about the progress of the conflict. Along with magazines, pamphlets and sermons from the pulpit, newspapers were the dominant method for nearly everyone to stay informed, and they helped to shape opinions about daily life. A perusal of a local or regional newspaper included descriptions of nearly all aspects of human activity: births, deaths, marriages, commercial products, sports, religion, politics, popular activities, and, of course, editorial opinions. In many ways, the newspapers of 1861 were not that different from 1961, absent, however, the competition from other forms of middle twentieth-century mass communication: radio, television, motion pictures, and especially newsreels. However, attitudes about newspapers in the middle nineteenth century were different than what we have come to understand in modern times. Papers throughout much of the nineteenth century played an essential role in advocating a clear and specific political view. Newspapers of this period were much like the country store in small towns. They were the place to go to find out what was going on in that corner of the world. Civil War newspapers fell into the period after the introduction of the penny press and before the appearance of muckraking reporting. Papers were cheap, and nearly everyone could afford to read them, with literacy rates quite high since the spread of public primary education.\textsuperscript{112}

There is one more cultural expression to consider, and it deals with the impact of the financial reality of newspapers during the Civil War. Newspapers, while ostensibly offering a useful public service, were created to make money for the owners. There was considerable growth in the circulation of newspapers, from 68 million copies in 1828 to 140 million copies by

\textsuperscript{112}For an understanding of newspapers of this period, see Harris, \textit{Blue and Grey}, and Margaret Leech, \textit{Reveille in Washington: 1860-1865} (New York: New York Review of Books, 1941).
1840, and their funding mechanisms also shifted.\textsuperscript{113} The rise and spread of the penny press significantly widened the size of the audience, but at the same time, it also restricted the volume of revenue from street sales. When newspapers were part of the political process and functioned as an "organ" of a political party, they received funding from that political party. With no more political party money and reduced street sales revenue, advertising became the dominant revenue source for newspapers. Historian George Lipsitz makes a compelling and relevant case when talking about the medium of television. He contrasts the ethnic and working-class backgrounds of households shown in early television shows, such as \textit{The Goldbergs} or \textit{Amos 'n Andy}, with how the industry delivered audiences to advertisers by glorifying consumption. His point is that the life depicted on these shows ran counter to the dominant social trends of that era.\textsuperscript{114} So what contrasts are there with the newspapers and their coverage of the Sanitary Fairs? There is some built-in tension between the coverage of the Sanitary Fairs, which is essentially an eleemosynary activity, and the profit-making purpose of a newspaper. After all, it is the reporter that is writing and promoting the Fair using the newspaper, and that stands in direct contrast with the newspaper owner who publishes the article to deliver readers to the advertiser.

Some of the more ambitious women in the Ladies Aid Societies longed to do more for their men and to provide higher levels of support for the Commission. While local efforts and local activities stirred and rallied neighbors and friends, the long drawn out conflict exhausted volunteers and supporters. The next section details the efforts of a determined group of


volunteers who saw a way to change the narrative about the war and, as a result, to widen and deepen the support for the Sanitary Commission.

**The Sanitary Fairs as a Cultural Expression**

It was in the period after Olmsted’s departure in 1863 that another kind of activity became part of the Sanitary Commission world, the Sanitary Fairs. The families of soldiers and the general public had, by the fall of 1863, been continuously disappointed with many false hopes of a short war and, sadly enough, a glorious victory. The war was neither short nor glorious; it was instead, protracted and sordid. It was amidst this mood of a confused, emotionally battered and exhausted public, hungry for diversion from the horrors of war that Mary Livermore and her branch colleagues changed the narrative with the invention of the Sanitary Fair.

Fairs, in all their varieties, were a common form of entertainment throughout the nineteenth century in the United States: religious and nonsectarian fairs, local and state agricultural fairs, as well as regional and national fairs of all shapes, sizes, and purposes. Rather than occurring in a static and continuous form of entertainment, conducted like a theater or concert in a fixed venue or building, fairs were often an outgrowth of another activity or entity. For example, it was common that a civic group or a church put on festivals. Various types of fairs shared a common element, regardless of origin or thematic flavor: they provided the interested public a form of entertainment and an opportunity for diversion, mutual social interaction, and cultural engagement. In the nineteenth century, a new use for fairs, the fundraising fair, was employed as the woman's fair, a place within the broader context of fairs.¹¹⁵ Beverly Gordon points out that the fundraising fair was the one place in nineteenth-century

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American life where women, outside the home, did not have to struggle for inclusion. "These were their events, where they had control and relative autonomy, and where they could express their own vision and priorities."

Gordon argues that the fundraising fair served as a kind of self-contained microcosm of social, cultural, and aesthetic change. Imported from England, these fundraising fairs seemed to include a fanciful tone connected with the domestic arts. Over time this led in the United States to the common practice of young, single women involved as fair volunteers, and associated with that was the notion of polite sexual tension between single men and women at the fairs.

Understanding how fundraising fairs in the United States were perceived and utilized in the middle of the nineteenth century is the background for what emerged in Chicago. Livermore and Hoge officially served as Associate Managers of the Northwestern Branch of the Sanitary Commission based in Chicago. Olmsted’s organizational design decentralized the work into eleven regional and state branch offices, each with a storage depot and distribution center.

“Although the national leaders of the Sanitary Commission were all men, all branch offices were managed by women.”

Livermore and her team corralled the incoming supplies, coordinated activities, and then redirected shipments to the battlefields. During her tenure, she and her team packed supplies, sent out some 77,660 shipments, wrote and mailed tens of thousands of letters, and distributed circulars by the hundred thousand.

Visits to the battlefields, viewing the sick and suffering, fueled Livermore to ever-higher levels of service. When she and Hoge learned

116 Beverly Gordon, xix.
119 Shields, 53.
that the headquarters of the Sanitary Commission struggled with its financial support, they could not stand by and risk the collapse of the work. "At last Mrs. Hoge and myself proposed a great Northwestern Fair….We were sure that a grand fair, in which the whole Northwest would unite, would replenish the treasury of the Commission…We knew, also that it would develop a grateful demonstration of the loyalty of the Northwest to our beloved but struggling country.”

Their proposal to the Sanitary Commission encountered skepticism; after all, it was coming from two women. "Accordingly, we consulted the gentlemen of the Commission, who languidly approved our plan, but laughed incredulously at our proposition to raise twenty-five thousand dollars for its treasury."

The creation of the first Sanitary Fair was a lengthy and involved process that Livermore and Hoge mounted as if they believed the entire war was at stake. In a sense, it was. What they had working in their favor were low expectations by others, a public exhausted from the war, and the powerful images they carried about death and dying. To their credit, they brought to the task a sense of determination and the ability to never take no for an answer. There had been some fundraising fairs during the first two years of the war. However, these had all been local and lacked any cohesion or comprehensive planning. What Livermore and Hoge envisioned was a regional fair where they would convince hundreds of local groups of all types to band together to create a grand-scale event to boost morale and raise significant funds. In their enthusiastic and energetic approach, they mirrored the thoroughness of Olmsted's organizational planning. However, they added something else he lacked, charm. Livermore’s skills of persuasion became

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120 Livermore, 410-411.
121 Livermore, 411.
a valuable tool that she used to motivate her legion of helpers. She cultivated these skills throughout her active life as an advocate for women’s issues.

Beyond building an active local committee to oversee the creation of this first Sanitary Fair, Livermore connected with every woman’s group throughout the Northwestern region. She solicited not only the commitment of these groups to participate but also enlisted each group in creating a network in its local area. What Livermore and team accomplished was a reflection of the structure that Olmsted had created for the Sanitary Commission itself, a network of networks. Building on the commitment of their participants, they also enlisted the personal power of the women to recruit the noncombatant men in their lives. In this way, they created a complex system that saturated the region with enlisted advocates. They did not stop there. They approached all significant employers, municipalitites, and elected representatives and convinced them to all close their offices, public and private, for the opening day of the Great Northwestern Sanitary Fair. The response was stunning. Offers of goods, services, materials, foodstuffs, and merchandise came pouring in from hundreds of miles surrounding Chicago. It took all their ingenuity to funnel it into the booths, exhibits, and foodservice.

The first regional Sanitary Fair opened on Tuesday, October 27, 1863, in grand fashion, just as Livermore and Hoge had planned. Thousands of spectators attended and watched the opening day parade as it spooled three miles long through Chicago. There were columns of police, military companies, civic clubs, religious organizations, one hundred wagons of farmers' produce, Army musicians, and groups of marching children waving American flags. Opening festivities included the unveiling of the original Emancipation Proclamation solicited directly

122 Stille, 186.
123 Scott, 75
124 Livermore, 409-417.
from President Abraham Lincoln, who reluctantly donated it. Nevertheless, Lincoln commented on how important he thought it was to respond to the enthusiasm of citizens supporting the war effort. This fair seemed to have something for everyone; livestock, produce, consumer goods, manufactured items, concerts, lively speeches, dances for young people, and an Art Gallery. There was even a Curiosity Shop, in the vein of P.T. Barnum’s American Museum, which included the largest display of war souvenirs and Americana yet seen in the North. There was a restaurant that could feed 3000 people at a time. "The fair was fueled by a sense of loyalty and charity, but Livermore, Hoge, and their helpers made certain the event was festive and exciting enough to capture everyone’s attention and imagination.” When the closing date of the Fair was extended to November 7, the Commission headquarters first got wind of their success. The Commission got its biggest surprise with the total receipts: Livermore reported a sum of $78,682 ($1,258,912 in present value). With these results, a change of attitude came over the leaders of the Commission and their perception of their potential future. Perhaps, equally important is what this outcome meant to the rest of the geographic spread of the Ladies Aid Societies. Not only did the success of the Fair provide an enormous boost to the public morale of the North, but it also raised the hopes of Northern cities considering how to do more to help the Commission. How this played out, and how the nearly two-dozen cities took on the implied challenge, was an unfolding story within the history of the Sanitary Commission. A few metropolitan regions, in quick succession, put on their own Sanitary Fair: Boston, MA, Rochester, NY, and Cincinnati, OH, and two of them surpassed Chicago in money raised. Table 1 below charts the major Sanitary Fairs.

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126 Livermore, 430.
127 Gordon, 63.
Table 1 - Features of the Major Sanitary Fairs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>$ Raised</th>
<th>Newspaper</th>
<th>Agricultural/ Commercial Booths</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lowell, MA</td>
<td>Feb. 1863</td>
<td>$4,850</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chicago, IL</td>
<td>Oct. 1863</td>
<td>$78,682</td>
<td>The Volunteer</td>
<td>yes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Portland, ME</td>
<td>Oct. 1863</td>
<td></td>
<td>The Commissioner</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boston, MA</td>
<td>Dec. 1863</td>
<td>$146,000</td>
<td>The Knapsack</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cincinnati, OH</td>
<td>Dec. 1863</td>
<td>$279,647</td>
<td>Ladies’ Knapsack</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brooklyn, NY</td>
<td>Feb. 1864</td>
<td>$403,000</td>
<td>The Drumbeat</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Albany, NY</td>
<td>Feb. 1864</td>
<td>$83,000</td>
<td>The Canteen</td>
<td></td>
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<td>Cleveland, OH</td>
<td>Feb. 1864</td>
<td>$79,000</td>
<td>Sanitary Fair Gazette</td>
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<tr>
<td>Poughkeepsie, NY</td>
<td>May 1864</td>
<td>$16,262</td>
<td>Duchess County Fair</td>
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<tr>
<td>New York, NY</td>
<td>April 1864</td>
<td>$2,000,000 est.</td>
<td>Spirit of the Fair</td>
<td>yes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Washington, D.C.</td>
<td>April 1864</td>
<td>$50,000</td>
<td>The New Era</td>
<td>yes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Baltimore, MD</td>
<td>April 1864</td>
<td>$80,000</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>St. Louis, MO</td>
<td>May 1864</td>
<td>$554,000</td>
<td>Daily Countersign</td>
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<td>Pittsburgh, PA</td>
<td>June 1864</td>
<td>$319,217</td>
<td></td>
<td>yes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Philadelphia, PA</td>
<td>June 1864</td>
<td>$1,035,398</td>
<td>Our Daily Faire</td>
<td>yes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dubuque, IA</td>
<td>June 1864</td>
<td>$76,494</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Boston, MA</td>
<td>Nov. 1864</td>
<td>$247,056</td>
<td>Boatswain’s Whistle</td>
<td>Commercial novelties</td>
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<td>Springfield, MA</td>
<td>Dec. 1864</td>
<td>$19,000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>Chicago, IL</td>
<td>May 1865</td>
<td>$325,000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Milwaukee, WI</td>
<td>June-July 1865</td>
<td>$80,000</td>
<td>Home Fair Journal</td>
<td>yes</td>
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**Total raised** $5,886,925

Taken from Beverly Gordon, Bazaars and Fair Ladies, 66-71.

The Great Northwestern Sanitary Fair, and the leadership of Livermore and Hoge, set a standard that other regions strove to emulate. “The ingenuity of local managers gave each fair a special character, but the general pattern was the same: committees scoured cities and tributary areas for commodities useful to the Commission and ransacked the community for articles that could be sold, auctioned – or where sentiment permitted – raffled, for the benefit of the Commission or the sponsoring branch.”128 While some of the top Commission leaders became active in a Fair in their locale, they did not conceive nor actively plan any of the subsequent Fairs; the Ladies Aid

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128 Bremner, The Public Good, 63.
Societies in each city did that on their own. The appearance of the Fairs in so many locations demonstrated that this form of cultural expression was a widespread phenomenon.

As the Great Northwestern Sanitary Fair geared up for its opening day, other cities began to pay attention to what was about to happen in Chicago. During the 12 days of its operation, visitors from other cities observed, took notes, and went back home with ideas that they could borrow, and perhaps even improve on.

Some parts of Livermore and Hoge’s design found their way into many other Fairs. The idea of a Sanitary Fair newspaper was one of them, with 16 of the 21 Sanitary Fairs having a specially named and printed newspaper. Another was a specially created restaurant. So many people wanted to eat at the restaurant in the Chicago Fair, that on some days hundreds of eager diners were turned away. Each locale felt challenged to outdo the others in size, innovation, and funds raised. These became elaborate multi-day events; Philadelphia’s Sanitary Fair, for example, ran from June 7 to June 28, 1864. The largest fairs were similar to industrial expositions.

They all combined typical interactive fair activities, selling local and exotic goods and crafts, and displaying exhibits with Civil War-themed offerings and events. Each locale looked for ways it could stand out, such as the Philadelphia Sanitary Fair, which arranged for 48 copies of the Emancipation Proclamation to be printed and individually autographed by Abraham Lincoln and Edwin Stanton, Cameron's successor. Lincoln's private secretary, John Nicolay, also signed them to prove they were authentic for auction. The New York Sanitary Fair raised the most money, $2 million ($32 million in present dollars). What is notable was how these fairs connected patriotic zeal for the war, compassion for the wounded and ill soldiers at the same time.

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129 Maxwell, 224.
time that they provided a framework for family and friends to redirect their anxieties and personal concerns.\textsuperscript{130} Gordon views the evolution of the Sanitary Fairs as the merger of the women’s fair with the activities associated with men. “Men became active participants, and they brought in many of the elements of their types of fairs, including exhibits of machinery and livestock, professionally designed horticulture displays, and a wealth of commercial sale merchandise.”\textsuperscript{131}

One of the more unusual elements that reappeared in subsequent Fairs was the Art Gallery. Public art museums were not a regular feature of American cities in the 1860s, so having an extensive collection of art in one place was something entirely novel. Gordon called it the “rarified atmosphere” of the Great Northwestern Sanitary Fair. She points out that the galleries went on to become “among the most highly praised features of the Fairs; they were consistently described in the press with epithets like the ‘crowning achievement,’ the ‘rarest attraction,’ and ‘the one thing that should not be missed.’”\textsuperscript{132} In Chicago, the interest was so high that the Art Gallery was kept open an additional two weeks after the close of the Sanitary Fair. Other Fairs that included an Art Gallery tried to vie with each other by increasing the viewing area. Art Galleries reached a pinnacle with the Philadelphia Fair and its 15,000-sq. ft. Art Gallery with more than 1,000 pictures on display. These Fairs often issued catalogs describing the art, which became lasting souvenirs kept long beyond the Civil War. "The art galleries clearly made a strong impression on the people of a war-torn nation, and their impact was lasting. Many observers expressed the wish that the galleries would remain open.”\textsuperscript{133}

\textsuperscript{131} Gordon, 11.
\textsuperscript{132} Gordon, 81.
\textsuperscript{133} Gordon, 85.
and women who were active in the Societies and the Fairs also played outsize roles in other cultural activities in the years that followed. One can find the names of these volunteer leaders who played important roles in helping to establish the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, the Philadelphia Museum of Art, and the Art Institute of Chicago in the 1870s and 1880s.  

One unexpected element that found its way into nearly half of the Sanitary Fairs was the interior landscaped hall. Formal horticulture exhibits were not new, but placing them within the context of a significant public event that attracted visitors from all walks of life was something entirely new. These were not just large accumulations of plants, shrubs, and trees; they included multiple, distinct landscape zones. The Philadelphia Fair went all out with its Horticultural Department and even included a central rotunda with a diameter of 190 feet. This type of exhibit required professional horticultural expertise and involved thousands of plants and hundreds of gardeners. For the first Chicago Fair, Livermore and Hoge provided a sense of grand scale, and this was transferred to living plants on display in a harmoniously designed environment. Similar to the experience of the Art Galleries, the landscaped halls attracted hundreds of thousands of people, all this at a time before public parks were a regular part of American life. There were several efforts underway to create public parks, including as we know, Olmsted’s Central Park, and many more were under discussion. It is easy to see that the full exposure to the public of these "indoor parks" helped to build general support for public parks in America. It was not only the artistic and cultural elements of the Fairs that gained attention and appeared again and again. One of the more unusual items, with great appeal to those of military bent or with engineering interests, was the 85-ft. long pool for the staged reenactment, with working scale models, of the

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battle between the *Monitor* and the *Merrimack*. These included powder, smoke, and sound effects. This Fair activity, like some others, showed up again in other Fairs, notably in the second Sanitary Fair in Chicago held in June 1865.

Philatelic scholars, Alvin Robert Kantor and Marjorie Sered Kantor, have detailed the appearance of post offices, stamps, and letters of the Sanitary Fairs.\(^{135}\) They have determined that there were eight Sanitary Fairs that had post offices that sold specially printed Sanitary Fair stamps and letters, known amongst collectors as "covers." Young women staffed these post offices, and they not only sold the stamps and preprinted letter stock but also were able to write letters for participants who were not literate. A visitor to the Fair could post a letter in the Sanitary Fair post office and have it delivered anywhere in the city. If they intended to send a letter anywhere else that the United States postal system served, it could be sent from the Sanitary Fair by affixing both a Sanitary Fair stamp and United States postal stamps. The Kantors believe that this aspect of issuing stamps received the approval of the U.S. Post Office. The Brooklyn and Long Island Sanitary Fair received and distributed between 4,000 and 5,000 letters. It was typical to sell the stamps at the Fairs with an accompanying envelope, specially printed for a Sanitary Fair. One of the best organized of the Fairs, the Philadelphia Sanitary Fair, gave special attention to its post office. "There is a very neatly arranged little house with four large windows, wreathed with evergreens – Those wishing to send a love missive to their inamoratas, can do so by buying and affixing thereon either a ten, twenty, or thirty cent stamp, the price of the stamp to be used depending on the sender's estimate of the value of his letter. There are already four thousand love notes in readiness for the onset…"\(^{136}\) The combination of


\(^{136}\) Kantor, 117.
the Fair stamps, Fair post offices, and the Fair newspapers offered a testament to the unique nature of the Sanitary Fairs. They were not just festive. Each was a small world unto itself. In addition to the service offered to Fair participants, the introduction of Sanitary Fair stamps began a practice, according to the Kantors, that led to the development of charity stamps and Christmas Seals internationally. The authors quote a Swedish report from a Tubercular Congress: "The honor of having invented the Charity Stamps must be given to America – the land of inventions."\(^{137}\)

The expansion of the Sanitary Fairs, their subsequent professionalism in marketing and overall presentation, and the great presence of commercialism were consistent with commercial activities at the time. Once the leadership of the Commission, and those of the branches, realized the potential for publicity, for boosted morale, and increased charitable revenue, the Sanitary Fairs became a virtual juggernaut that only stopped with the end of the Civil War. Even then, once the Chicago branch had made plans to do its second Sanitary Fair, larger and more elaborate than the first one, the end of the war in April 1865 did not stop them from holding it in June. Perhaps they rationalized that there would be continued health needs for soldiers, that it would require time to de-commission the vast Union armies, and that things would not stop quickly. The last circular from the Sanitary Commission, sent to all the branches, did bring the work of the volunteers to a conclusion. "It is not too much to say, that the Army of women at home has fully matched in patriotism and in sacrifices the Army of men in the field. The mothers, sisters, wives, and daughters of America have been worthy of their sons, brothers, husbands, and fathers who were fighting their battles."\(^{138}\) The thousands of volunteers had much

\(^{137}\) Kantor, p. 14.
to look back upon with satisfaction and pride. After all, the 21 major Sanitary Fairs, as shown in Table 1, raised a combined $5,886,925, which in present value is equal to $94,190,800.

**Seen Through the Newspapers**

Newspapers of the period had a great deal to report about the Sanitary Fairs. Some of the reports were as much about the war as about the Fairs. While the reporting ostensibly served to publicize the Sanitary Fairs, we observe a set of themes. Frequently found in the coverage was a focus on the vast array of goods that were offered for sale. Early versions of the department store appeared in New York City in the middle 1840s and slowly made its way, as a type of retail outlet, through the largest cities in the country, with Boston getting its first store in 1847. The idea of having unfettered access to a wide variety of items at the Sanitary Fairs was at least a novelty, if not alluring. "Everything that man or woman, wedded, spinster or bachelor, old middle-aged, juvenile or fresh from the nursery, could desire either for use, ornament or beauty was to be purchased at them." The newspapers were full of reports before the openings of each Fair that the organizers were seeking a wide variety of goods, and this certainly would have helped build curiosity on the part of the reading public. Absent from these reports was any reference to the disruption in the availability of domestic goods and services caused by the war. While the North did not suffer from a blockade of its shores like the Confederacy, at the very least, everyone knew that the war effort was absorbing a large volume of consumables. The Fairs' long lists of consumer goods must have been a welcome diversion from the wartime regimen.

A second theme in the newspaper articles was coverage paid to the food and dining at the Fairs. Since most Fairs had a restaurant, writers went to some length to describe the food

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choices. “Look at the many tables close-crowded with guests. Each one pays 50 cents and receives a dinner fit for a prince.”140 The opening day in the Cleveland Sanitary Fair received front-page coverage and detailed not only the notables present but also the celebratory dinner. Reporters for the Fairs went to great lengths to laud the prepared meals but also to explain that the availability of such meals was the result of the robust efforts of Fair volunteers.141

A third theme was the great attention to color commentary, including decorations, general mood, tone of the events, and the attitudes of the volunteers. Writers paid tribute to how successful the Fair organizers were in obtaining large volumes of goods for purchase and prepared foods for consumption, all offered honest prices and absent any budget for the organizers to buy supplies. The implication was one of high civic duty and intense local pride.142

The pageantry and festive nature of the Fairs attracted much attention, and this was easy for the newspapers to do because, following Livermore's and Hoge's model, most of these Fairs had a formal opening event. Another descriptive motif was the frequent and elaborate articles on the pageantry and, even merrymaking, of the opening parades. These included lengthy descriptions of the participants with an emphasis on the use of military parade language.143 The frequent imagery of military-like processions, made of up civilian participants, was a not so subtle message that everyone is a warrior, even those without weapons.

Descriptions of the festive mood and the enormous size of the crowds were another common theme. Either the writers had lost their objectivity, assuming that they had any, or they were genuinely portraying the high mood that surrounded the Fairs. Descriptions of eager

141 “The Great Fair,” The Daily Cleveland Herald (Cleveland, Ohio) February 23, 1864.
143 “The Great Sanitary Fair,” The Daily Cleveland Herald (Cleveland, Ohio), February 2, 1864.
buyers, curious onlookers, and families out for a day of entertainment were the norm. 144

News stories made a special effort to publicize the names of participants, volunteers, donors, and special guests, always to demonstrate the solemnity of the occasion. One person of note, a major general, gave a speech on the opening day of the Cleveland Fair, speaking of the soldiers and those back home who supported them. "Behind these again is another rank – the great and mighty people, standing with firm courage to support both the civil power and the soldiers. Moreover, behind them all, giving strength and confidence to all, are the affections of home – the prayers and blessing of the family circle – the active assistance of the women and children left at home. Thus, the whole people are massed into one grand army."145 Giving this address was Major General James A. Garfield, who 17 years later became President of the United States.

Newspapers throughout the Union reported on the progress of the Sanitary Fair phenomena whether or not their city had one or was planning one. A notable example was the widespread coverage given to the donation by President Abraham Lincoln of the original copy of the Emancipation Proclamation to the Great Northwestern Sanitary Fair, including sharing the text of his letter to Mary Livermore.

Case Study: Sanitary Commission Activities in Maine

While at a greater physical distance from the war than some other Northern states, Maine citizens were deeply engaged in the Civil War. Regardless of the distance, Maine citizens paid rapt attention to the war events. The state was amply covered with newspapers to keep readers informed. Between 1861 and 1865, Portland, Maine, with its population of 26,341, had eight daily newspapers for residents of the city and the nearby towns. Bangor, the second-largest city

with a population of 16,407, had seven newspapers available to inform its citizens.\textsuperscript{146} Readers who wanted to know more about the activities of the Sanitary Commission could receive direct communications from the headquarters in Washington. “All persons wishing to keep themselves constantly informed of the doings of the Commission in its multifarious operations throughout the country should send two dollars to the agent, and receive, for one year the semi-monthly Bulletin, a treasury of most interesting and useful information.”\textsuperscript{147}

In April 1862, Portland became the site of a support group for the Commission, called the Maine Agency, the Ladies Aid Society of Portland.\textsuperscript{148} Throughout the war, women around the state formed Ladies Aid or Soldier’s Aid Societies in their city or town. Bangor, Belfast, Bethel, Biddeford, Cranberry Isle, Gorham, Kennebunk, Lovell, Salmon Falls, Stillwater, and Wiscassett were just some of the many locations in the state where Societies formed. These Societies joined their sister organizations throughout the Union in gathering needed materials, sewing garments, and sending resources to the Commission.\textsuperscript{149}

Ladies Aid Societies in Maine expressed their support for the Commission in ways that were both similar and unique, compared to other parts of the Union. Portland Ladies Aid supporters participated in a social levee to raise money for "the benefit of the Sick and Wounded Soldiers in the Field" scheduled for April 6, 1864.\textsuperscript{150} One of the atypical activities was a set of lectures to raise money and promote the cause. "Independent Course of Lectures on the State of the Country in aid of the U. S. Sanitary Commission. Arrangements have been perfected for a

\textsuperscript{146} Newspapers by Location and Title, Maine State Archives - Volume One, University of Maine Fogler Library; United States Census of 1860, United States Census Bureau (Washington, D.C 1860). https://www.census.gov/library/publications/1866/dec/1860d.html
\textsuperscript{147} Daily Eastern Argus, Portland, Maine, January 14, 1865, 3.
\textsuperscript{148} Kantor, 184.
\textsuperscript{150} Daily Eastern Argus, February 11, 1864, 3.
series of eight or ten popular addresses to be delivered in New City Hall, by distinguished
gentlemen from different parts of the country, on the great absorbing theme of daily life and
thought….“151 Included in the list of lecturers was Frederick Douglass, the noted escaped slave
and abolitionist advocate. When such celebrities came to Maine, they generated interest before
and sometimes after a lecture. In the newspaper publicity for his talk, Douglass stridently
reminded Republicans about the real purpose of the war. "The war is for abolition, and its object
must be announced and carried on accordingly.\(^{152}\) An anecdote about Douglas, following the
lecture, contributed to keeping Ladies Aid activities in the news. “A well dressed, middle-aged
man was walking close behind Mr. Douglass last Monday forenoon on one of the streets of this
city calling out to his acquaintances as he met them, ‘Here is the nigger,’ and chuckling to
himself over his wit. He had turned half around to exchange a laugh with a friend, when
Douglass with a quick, silent motion seized him firmly with both hands by the coat collar,
brought him round face to face with ‘the nigger,’ and looked down on him with the calmness of
superior strength and perfect good temper. ‘You are an insulting, cowardly fellow,’ he said, with
a mildness that was more stinging than an angry tone could have been, and let him go. The
mean-spirited fellow sneaked off amid the jeers of his acquaintances, the most cowed and abject
specimen of the ‘superior race’ that has been seen in these parts for a long time.”\(^{153}\) The citizens
of Portland received another unusual effort, one that was led by Mrs. Shailer and Mrs. Rae of the
Portland Sanitary Committee, to build a home for the sick, wounded or needy soldier in
transit.\(^{154}\)

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152 *Daily Eastern Argus*, April 1, 1864, 3.
153 *The Transcript*, Portland, Maine, April 9, 1864, 11.
154 *Daily Eastern Argus*, April 1, 1864, 2.
The Bangor Ladies Aid Society was typical of other Societies in intensity, direction, and focus. Its activities were noted frequently in the Bangor papers. For example, between April 30, 1861, and January 1, 1865, some ten announcements in the *Bangor Jeffersonian* detailed their efforts to create comfort items and conduct public social events. The mayor of Bangor praised the women of his city in the Annual Report. “…and while our city, in its corporate capacity, is doing so much for the needy at home, our citizens, though the 'Ladies' Agency to the Sanitary Commission' are doing the grandest work yet undertaken in this or any other country – that of providing for the sick and wounded of our armies.”

Maine readers were aware of the Sanitary Commission, and the phenomena of the Sanitary Fairs were of high interest. "The extraordinary financial success of the Sanitary Fairs has been the wonder of the whole country, and has even excited attention abroad." Maine papers reported unique contributions and ideas featured in the different Fairs. “A sword worth $1500 has been given to the St. Louis Sanitary Fair to be disposed of by votes like the Grant sword in New York.” Items that garnered attention were not limited to those that were patriotic. "A prize bonnet is voted for at the Sanitary Fair, at 25 cents a vote, each voter throwing his or her ballot for the wife of some favorite General." This news item could have been about any one of the three Sanitary Fairs held in June 1864: Pittsburg, Philadelphia, or Dubuque.

Maine readers learned of the efforts of other cities, each determined to make the biggest splash with their Fair. "Commodore Vanderbilt offered to give as much for the great Sanitary Fair now coming off in New York as any other man. Whereupon A.T. Stewart, the great dry

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156 *Daily Eastern Argus*, March 26, 1864.
157 *The Transcript*, May 7, 1864, 43.
158 *The Transcript*, June 25, 1864,
goods dealer, drew his check for $100,000 and Mr. Vanderbilt covered it, according to his promise."\textsuperscript{159} The Maine newspapers reported the ongoing competition building between the more ambitious cities. “The New-Yorkers are predicting that the Metropolitan Sanitary Fair, which opens in that city on the 28\textsuperscript{th} instance, will realize one million dollars. The Philadelphians boast that they can beat New York.”\textsuperscript{160} Sometimes news about Sanitary Fairs became entertainment items. “The Cincinnati Sanitary Fair refused to accept a donation of 100 barrels of lager beer from the brewers of that city. The soldiers would not have done that.”\textsuperscript{161}

In the spring of 1864, Sarah Shipley, Secretary of the Bangor Ladies Aid Society and working with the Canvassing Committee, wrote numerous letters to her friends and acquaintances around Maine. They were soliciting aid as they prepared for Bangor's Sanitary Fair to raise money “for the suffering endured by our brave soldiers.”\textsuperscript{162} Shipley's call for assistance was followed in a few weeks by a broadsheet announcing the opening day, December 20, 1864. “The Ladies Sanitary Fair will embrace so many departments that nothing can possibly be sent amiss, and every article donated will have a place waiting to receive it.”\textsuperscript{163} Calls for help were matched by requests for donated funds. When it came to their Sanitary Fair, the Bangor volunteers appeared to follow the playbook of Livermore and Hoge. Organizers set up 36 different committees to stimulate interest and shepherd the resources from all the businesses, civic groups, manufacturers, retail stores, professional groups, restaurants, and volunteer citizens within the greater Bangor region. Another Bangor newspaper, the \textit{Bangor Whig & Courier}, beginning on Wednesday, December 14, extensively covered the Sanitary Fair before, during,

\textsuperscript{159} The Transcript, Maine, April 9, 1864, 11.
\textsuperscript{160} Daily Eastern Argus, March 26, 1864, 3.
\textsuperscript{161} Daily Eastern Argus, January 15, 1864, 3.
\textsuperscript{162} Sarah Shipley, Correspondence, April 24, 1864, Coll. S. 2279, Misc. Box 287/8, Maine Historical Society.
\textsuperscript{163} Broadsheet, Ladies Sanitary Fair, 1864, Coll. S. 2279, Misc. Box 287/8, Maine Historical Society.
and after its run. The editors launched the coverage with the publication of "An Appeal on Behalf of the Sanitary Commission," signed by Bellows and five members of the Commission. Explaining that the necessity to provide relief had increased rather than decreased. The Appeal stressed the vital importance of obtaining the "sympathy and support of the American people."  

The opening day of the Bangor Sanitary Fair received considerable coverage with colorful descriptions and typical nineteenth-century journalistic bombast. "The floor of the hall is occupied in the center, at the entrance by the Hospital Tent, built in the most artistic military-style and beautifully decorated with evergreens, pictures, and portraits, with the names of our brave Generals, Grant, Sherman, Howard, Thomas, and the gallant Farragut." One of the more unusual contributions to the Bangor Sanitary Fair was the printing and distribution of a Sanitary Fair Cookbook. Published specifically for the Fair, it was a collection of 98 local recipes contributed by members of the Bangor Ladies Aid Society and their friends and neighbors. Thought to be lost, it was only in 1967 when a copy of the cookbook resurfaced in California, and the Bangor Historical Society reprinted it along with snippets of the Bangor Jeffersonian of the period.

The Meaning of the Sanitary Fairs

Considered in their totality, the Sanitary Fairs had a powerful effect on all of their participants, including the women and noncombatant men who helped put them on. As such,

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164 *Bangor Whig & Courier*, December 14, 1864, Bangor Public Library, 3.
165 *Whig & Courier*, December 21, 1864, 3.
166 The *Sanitary Fair Cook Book* (Bangor: Bangor Museum and History Center, 2012).
167 "Little Bangor’s Big Fire," *New York Times*, May 2, 1911, 10. The fire of 1911 destroyed most of downtown Bangor, including the Bangor Historical Society, the Bangor Public Library, 285 residences, 100 businesses, and six churches.
they became much more than a public method to raise support for the Commission. What is noteworthy is how the Union public was drawn to and became engaged in these fundraising fairs. They were different from the fundraising fairs that had preceded the Civil War. The women and male noncombatants had a new kind of public forum, both patriotic and civic-minded. The Sanitary Fairs allowed them, as volunteers and participants, to express, within their local community, their sorrow about the war and their hope for the future. The Fairs offered family members of fighting men a social context in which to express their support and general patriotism and find relief from the horrors of the conflict. The Fairs brought together community members in a festive and celebratory atmosphere. Unlike traditional community events, the Fairs included grand spectacle; being part circus, part dramatic presentation, part military parade, and part carnival.

These events were large enough to get lost in and to have pockets for quiet reflection. Perhaps even more importantly, the structure and unspoken rules of the Fairs offered women in the Northern states a wide rein for leadership and experimentation. As we saw with the Ladies Aid Societies, volunteer engagement gave women a safe place to congregate, collaborate, and find expression for their war-related concerns. The attractions of participation in local Aid Societies were enlarged and turned outward with the Fairs for interactions with much larger groups of friends, neighbors, community, and regional participants. The Fairs considerably widened the zone of safety for women beyond what they found with their local group. They became a staging ground for women to go beyond the gender constraints of the mid-nineteenth century limitations.

Women active in the Societies and Fairs went beyond organizing and channeling energy in support of the Commission. They gained valuable personal skills to help them achieve other
social goals in civic engagement, advocacy, and activism. Livermore was not alone in pursuing voting rights for women in her later years. As did others, she pursued the “state by state” strategy by focusing her women’s right to vote efforts in the state of Massachusetts. In the years following the Civil War, many associations and activist groups attracted women with social agendas. Among these was the Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU), which, seven years after its founding in 1873, became the largest women's group in the United States.\textsuperscript{168}

While the WCTU had strong connections with religious denominations, particularly the Protestant faiths, its strong advocacy aimed at corralling men's behavior was widely attractive to women. Organizing volunteers, assembling resources, creating publicity, and holding one another accountable, were all activities that volunteer and volunteer leaders needed for success. These were skills women gained in the Ladies Aid Societies and Sanitary Fairs and propelled them in attaining new social goals in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Lawrence Levine's views on popular culture, although conceived as an analysis of twentieth-century cultural history, have relevance for the nineteenth century. The Sanitary Fairs offer scholars a way to reconstruct attitudes of the noncombatants during the Civil War; they are a means of capturing the common voice of the people.\textsuperscript{169} Some of Levine's critics might note that the Fairs did not emanate from the people, but instead originated with individual Aid Societies. Levine's argument has value in that there was little division between the motivations of the organizers and the Fair participants. It appears they were both engaged for nearly the same reasons. Also, the Fairs were not profit-making business activities where the revenue returned to the organizers for their personal financial gain. In another relevant point, Levine


\textsuperscript{169} Lawrence W. Levine, \textit{The Folklore of Industrial Society: Popular Culture and Its Audiences} \textit{American Historical Review} 97 no. 5 (1992), 1370.
argues that during the nineteenth century, a process of "cultural bifurcation" developed, which eventually separated into high and popular forms of art and entertainment.\textsuperscript{170} Since the Fairs occurred in the middle of the century, it may have been too early for Levine's bifurcation to take hold. Also, the Fairs do not easily fit either designation because of their broad appeal and multi-class participation. The Sanitary Fairs brought something absorbing and utterly engaging to the war-weary citizens of the major cities during the last two years of the Civil War.

Ladies Aid Societies and Sanitary Fairs provided two distinct platforms, operating at different levels for Northern women and noncombatant men during the war. The Societies provided a platform that was locally run and convened in the comforting confines of a neighbor's home or town venue. The Fairs, as region-wide activities, involved far higher numbers, many of them from farther away, and designed to achieve a dramatic public display. Both the Societies and Fairs acted to help overcome societal constraints placed on women allowing them to express their longings to support the conflict and their fighting men.

\textsuperscript{170} Lawrence W. Levine, \textit{Highbrow/Lowbrow: The Emergence of Cultural History in America} (Harvard University, Cambridge, 1988), 60.
CHAPTER 5
CONCLUSION

The activities connected with the Sanitary Commission had a lasting impact on the nonprofit sector in the United States. This impact is observable in at least two forms; the nature of charitable giving efforts and its size in the United States. Until the Civil War, large-scale charitable fundraising efforts, those that saturated a single region or covered multiple regions of the country, were always connected with a church organization or as part of church-sponsored higher education. The closest Americans came to mounting national efforts to raise gift money in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries came from the colleges and universities. By 1745, the three existing colleges, Harvard, William and Mary, and Yale, were all religiously based institutions. This trend continued, and by 1775 seven more colleges came into being; these too operated from religious foundations. All of the efforts outside of higher education before the Civil War, even the ones not ostensibly limited to narrow geographies, such as the Bunker Hill Monument Association of Boston (1825) or the Washington National Monument Society (1833) raised only modest amounts. Neither of them became a real national program. It was not that serious efforts did not take place in attempts to stir the public to raise funds for worthy causes. Earnest attempts were made in the 1820s to help the Greeks in their war for independence and in the 1840s to aid the victims of the Irish Famine. These neither accrued broad public sentiment nor achieved significant charitable funds raised. In both cases, while some funds came in, they were not on a national level.

Two of the more successful efforts in the first half of the nineteenth century to raise money throughout the United States were the American Colonization Society (ACS) and the
American Bible Society (ABS). The ACS attempted to help solve the slave problem by establishing colonies in Africa as a home for freed slaves from the United States. However, this organization relied heavily on money from individual state legislatures and Congress.\textsuperscript{171} The ABS was very successful in distributing bibles widely, but it was a religiously based activity.\textsuperscript{172}

The activities of the Sanitary Commission, Ladies Aid Societies and Sanitary Fairs represented new ground in sectarian philanthropy and resulted in some critical advances in the American eleemosynary sector. The combined work of the Commission, Societies, and Fairs constituted the first national fundraising effort in the United States not connected with a church or a religious order. Given this historical departure, the work of the Commission, Societies, and Fairs became even more critical in terms of laying the groundwork for the future nonprofit sector.

The second form of change worthy of attention is the size of the philanthropic impact of the Commission during the war. The table below includes data from two significant primary sources. The first publication, by Linus Pierpont Brockett, is \textit{The Philanthropic Results of The War in America}.\textsuperscript{173} The second is Frank B. Goodrich’s \textit{The Tribute Book}, as noted in Chapter 1. What is noteworthy is how, using different methods of tabulation, both authors came exceeding close to the same total for charitable contributions given to the Sanitary Commission.

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{171} Bremner, \textit{The Public Good}, 16-17. \\
\textsuperscript{172} \textit{New York Times}, October 21, 2015. \\
\textsuperscript{173} L. P. Brockett, \textit{The Philanthropic Results of The War in America: Collected from Official and Other Authentic Sources by an American Citizen} (New York: Sheldon & Co., 1864).
\end{flushright}
Table 2 - *The Value of the Charitable Contributions to the Sanitary Commission*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category of Funds</th>
<th>Brockett’s Valuation</th>
<th>Goodrich’s Valuation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cash contributions</td>
<td>$24,044,856.96</td>
<td>$41,696,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gifts-in-kind</td>
<td>$17,500,000.00</td>
<td>None noted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total 1865 dollars raised</td>
<td>$41,544,856.96</td>
<td>$41,696,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Value in Current dollars</td>
<td>$664,717,711.36</td>
<td>$667,136,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Brockett asserted that the cash amount raised by the Commission was $24,044,856.96. His estimate of the total value of the gifts-in-kind from donations of goods and services from individuals, businesses, and free freight transportation from the railroads came to $17,500,000. Goodrich confirms these surprisingly large numbers. By separate calculations, Goodrich contends that the Commission and its networks raised $41,696,000. What is interesting is that he obtains this number without including any donations of materials, services or free freight from the railroads. It is clear from these two sources that the Commission and its networks raised more than $660,000,000 in today's dollars.

Charitable giving of this level was something utterly new in the United States. For example, James Smithson’s $500,000 bequest ($13,500,000 today) in 1829, used to establish the Smithsonian Institution, was considered at the time an extraordinary large contribution. After 176

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174 Brockett, *Philanthropic Results*, 152-160.
175 Goodrich, 495-506.
Andrew Carnegie sold his steel mills to J. P. Morgan, in 1901 for $480 million, he became a devoted philanthropist. By the time of his death in 1919, he had given away a total of $350 million.\textsuperscript{177} It was not until the expansion of the economy following the First World War that the size of charitable giving exceeded the amount given to the Commission. Furthermore, these new giving records were the combined total of all charitable giving in the country. “Total philanthropic giving advanced (it is estimated) from $1,730,600,000 in 1921 to $2,330,600,000 in 1928.”\textsuperscript{178} Additionally, it is important to note the short amount of time over which the Commission raised its massive total of contributions. Anyone familiar with nonprofit fundraising practices knows that for an organization to reach numbers this high normally requires many years of diligent work and continued focus on programs and methods. It is even more remarkable, therefore, that the Sanitary Commission accomplished this feat as a new organization, and it did so in only four years of activity.

The primary attention of this paper has been on the connections and collaboration between the Commission, Societies, and Fairs. Secondary sources have detailed the activities of these three and recalled their unique value and historical importance. However, these sources lack any systematic assessment of the interconnection of these entities. The case put forward here is that each of the three parts played a significant role in the social and cultural engagement of noncombatants during the war. Strong linkages existed among the Sanitary Commission, the three key individuals, the Ladies Aid Societies, and the Sanitary Fairs. This perspective stands in contrast to a view that they happened simultaneously, or as happenstance, as might be drawn from the primary and secondary materials discussed earlier. The Commission, by its design and organizational thrust, provided the structure, not only for delivering improved healthcare for

\textsuperscript{177} Joseph Frazier Wall, \textit{Andrew Carnegie} (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970), 882-884.
\textsuperscript{178} Seeley, 21.
wounded and ill soldiers but also for helping to empower the noncombatants. The Ladies Aid Societies, located in nearly every town and city of the Union, acted as an extension of the Sanitary Commission. Together they created a mechanism, fueled by women, for neighbors and friends on the home front to participate in supporting the war in ways both useful and personally nurturing.

Moreover, the Sanitary Fairs, with their elaborate and festive format, open to virtually anyone, presented a social delivery system that allowed citizens to engage and to connect, all in the form of a lively cultural activity. The Commission, Societies, and Fairs, normalized opportunities for citizens to congregate and express their support and longings in what was anything but ordinary times. Most importantly, these opportunities became a social engagement framework for Northern families that bolstered cultural life and greatly enhanced cultural expression in perilous times.

As a result of the involvement of women in the Societies and Fairs in activities outside the home, women in subsequent years were shown a new model of behavior and new pathways for expression. A case in point is the life of Mary A. Livermore. Once she became empowered through her work with the Sanitary Commission and energized by the Sanitary Fairs, she went on to further social leadership and became a significant figure in the American feminist movement. Livermore was in her forties during the Civil War and went on to have a long and active life in the suffrage movement.179 Her books, her lectures, her activities, and involvement in post-Civil War social associations encouraged others to contemplate an alternative, civic-focused life. Her experiences with the Commission and the Fairs demonstrated the value of at least two attributes for a new perspective for women in the volunteer and philanthropic sector. Before the Societies

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179 Scott, 75.
and Fairs, women’s activities outside the home were perceived by men as purely social, usually providing cultural entertainment. The outpouring of women's involvement and engagement in the Societies and Fairs, and the flood of support and funds that it produced during the Civil War, challenged that view. As a result, it contributed to a weakening of the male-centric view. The other attribute that Livermore's engagement provided to women was that experimentation and innovation were also accessible to them. Before the Sanitary Fairs, a typical male response to an organizational idea or strategy coming from a woman was observable in the example of the Commission's response to Livermore and Hoge's proposal for the first Sanitary Fair.

Social policy scholar Theda Skocpol argues that the engagement of women in the Civil War was part of a long process that contributed to helping to define how women constructed a role in shaping society. “Yet it is obvious that women, who were deliberately left out of the original independent, patriarchal, property-holding conception of republican citizenship, developed in creative tension with republican and liberal ideals their own values to sustain civic participation and action for community welfare.”180

How the noncombatants during the Civil War collaborated and created a social engagement arena went well beyond helping soldiers and helping themselves. As Skocpol asserts, these volunteers, volunteer leaders, and donors made use of the republican and liberal ideals to create for themselves and their successors in civic engagement, new patterns for civilian action.

Another essential aspect argued in this paper is that the linkage of the three forms of philanthropic activities demonstrated a higher level of impact for nonprofits. Detailed above, the actions and behaviors of Bellows, Livermore and Olmsted were three archetypes for philanthropic activity. Employing their unique individual gifts, they "moved the needle" on the

dial of their philanthropic performance. This went beyond the influence of their collective action and resulted in an enormous outpouring of charitable support, and a massive surge in moral support. The later work of Pierce and Ward in the YMCA movement in the early twentieth century, built on the advances of the Commission network and became the basis of all modern fundraising campaigns. Moreover, the three archetypes modeled by Bellows, Olmsted, and Livermore are potent symbols for a collaborative formula to better understand the funding of modern nonprofit organizations.

The Sanitary Commission, the Ladies Aid Societies, and the Sanitary Fairs provided the power to ignite the three forms of philanthropy. As a result, these three entities combined to offer a neutral place for the anxious, heartsick, and fearful to overcome the violence to family and culture the Civil War brought into the living room, classroom, tavern, and church meeting hall. Scholars and advocates of the American eleemosynary world gain an extremely potent perspective. It is the energy of volunteering, the commitment of volunteer leadership, and the intentions of charitable giving that unite to fuel the nonprofit sector.
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Martin L. Novom was born in Los Angeles, California. He graduated from Kanto Mura High school in Tokyo, Japan in 1965, a U.S. Air Force Dependent School operated under the auspices of Headquarters 5th Air Force. Martin graduated from San Fernando Valley State College (now California State University, Northridge) in Northridge, California in 1970, with a Bachelors of Arts in Business Administration. He has worked as a professional philanthropic fundraiser for 34 years both as a staff member and as a consultant for nonprofit organizations. Martin attained the professional certification, Certified Fund Raising Executive (CFRE), in 1992. He has taught and lectured in the nonprofit field to fundraisers, CEOs and board members for fundraising certificate programs and in fundraising educational conferences throughout the United States and Canada. Martin was the Co-Director of the Waldorf Administration Training Program at Rudolf Steiner College, Fair Oaks, California, from 2004 to 2010. He is the author and editor of the Wiley & Sons 2007 book, The Fundraising Feasibility Study: It’s Not About the Money. Martin’s most recent staff position, 2011 to 2018, was as a major gifts officer for the University of Maine Foundation. His current work is as the Principal of his own consulting, teaching and publishing organization, the Alexis de Tocqueville Institute. Martin is a candidate for the Masters of Arts degree in History from the University of Maine in May 2020.