



The New York Public Library
Manuscripts and Archives Division

Guide to the

United States Sanitary Commission records. American Association for the Relief of the Misery of Battle Fields archives

1866-1871

MssCol 22290

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Compiled by Susan P. Waide, 2013

Summary

Creator: United States Sanitary Commission

Title: United States Sanitary Commission records. American Association for the Relief of the Misery of Battle Fields archives

Date: 1866-1871

Size: .42 linear feet (1 box)

Source: Donated by the United States Sanitary Commission to the Astor Library, 1879

Abstract: The American Association for the Relief of the Misery of Battle Fields (AARMB) was the first American branch of the Comité Internationale de Secours aux Militaires Blessés (later known as the Red Cross), founded in Geneva in 1863. The main objective of the parent society was to secure neutrality in time of war for hospitals, ambulances, surgeons, and all persons legitimately engaged in caring for the sick and wounded, by international agreement. The AARMB, founded in 1866 by persons affiliated with the USSC, worked to secure U.S. adoption of the Geneva Convention treaty of 1864, and to promote and support the operations of the international organization. The records of the Association consist of outgoing correspondence, meeting minutes, financial records, and copies of its publications documenting the Association's administrative work, including promotional and fundraising activities, from its founding in 1866 to its effective closing in 1870.

Preferred citation: United States Sanitary Commission records. American Association for the Relief of the Misery of Battle Fields archives, Manuscripts and Archives Division, The New York Public Library

Processing note: Compiled by Susan P. Waide, 2013

Creator History

The American Association for the Relief of the Misery of Battle Fields (AARMB) was the first American branch of the Comité Internationale de Secours aux Militaires Blessés (later known as the Red Cross), founded in Geneva in 1863. The main objective of the parent society was to secure neutrality in time of war for hospitals, ambulances, surgeons, and all persons legitimately engaged in caring for the sick and wounded, by international agreement. The AARMB, founded in 1866 by persons affiliated with the

USSC, worked to secure U.S. adoption of the Geneva Convention treaty of 1864, and to promote and support the operations of the international organization. It effectively ceased operations in 1870.

The AARMB was organized at the official request of the international society by its secretary, J. Henry Dunant, to USSC president Henry W. Bellows in December, 1865. Its founding members, all of whom bore associations with the USSC, first met officially at the USSC's Historical Bureau in New York City on January 26, 1866. Elected officers included Henry W. Bellows (President), Howard Potter (Treasurer), and Charles Loring Brace (Secretary). Charles S.P. Bowles, previously associated with the USSC's European Branch, was appointed its agent in Paris. Bowles had represented the USSC at the Geneva Convention in 1864, being one of two delegates representing the United States with non-signatory powers. John Bowne, formerly head of the USSC's Hospital Directory, was manager of its New York office located at 23 Bible House, Astor Place. Elisha Harris, M.D. also played an active role in its affairs. The Association's operations were funded by loans from the U.S. Sanitary Commission and from private donations.

The Association offered advice based on the USSC's relief work during the Civil War, and raised funds for relief work in Europe during the Franco-Prussian War, but ceased fundraising and other activities in November 1870, believing the efforts of the Geneva organization to be sufficient. The Association was also in contact with former USSC associates such as Thomas W. Evans and Edward A. Crane, officers of the American International Sanitary Committee in Paris. The AARMB was unsuccessful in its lobbying efforts to have the U.S. government ratify the Geneva treaty; that did not take place until 1882, due in large part to the efforts of Clara Barton.

Scope and Content Note

The records of the American Association for the Relief of the Misery of Battle Fields (AARMB) consist of outgoing correspondence, meeting minutes, financial records, and copies of its publications. These materials document the work of the Association's administration, including promotional and fundraising activities, from its founding in 1866 to its effective closing in 1870. Incoming correspondence is represented only by register sheets listing letters received, 1865-1867. Miscellaneous documents include a fundraising plan in the hand of Henry W. Bellows, and a January 1871 list of AARMB items forwarded to the USSC, which states that Elisha Harris retained incoming letters and a scrapbook for eventual forwarding to the USSC. These are not found in the collection.

Container List

- b. 1 Letters sent 1866 Jan 26-1870 Nov 28 (Letterpress copybook with index)
 - v. 1
- b. 1 f. 1 Register of letters received undated
Historical Bureau register (loose sheets) of letters #1-16 dated 1865 Dec 18-1867 Apr 12, providing name of correspondent, where written, dates sent and received, to whom referred, and summary of contents. The actual letters are not present in the collection.
- b. 1 Minutes 1866 Jan 26-1870 Nov 14
 - v. 2 Formal entry of minutes; only the first ten leaves of the volume were used
- b. 1 f. 2 Loose minutes and notes 1866-1870, undated
Original and draft copies of some minutes found in the above volume, with minutes of the first meeting of the Executive Committee, 1870 Sep 26
- b. 1 f. 3 Financial records 1866-1867, 1870
Ledger, 1866; journal, 1866; and cash accounts 1866-1867, 1870
- b. 1 f. 4 List of circulars sent 1870
- b. 1 f. 5 Miscellaneous documents 1865, 1871, undated
- b. 1 f. 6 Pamphlets and leaflets of the Association 1866-1867, 1870