



The New York Public Library  
Manuscripts and Archives Division

Guide to the

**United States Sanitary Commission records. Department of North Carolina archives**

1862-1865

MssCol 18581

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Compiled by Melissa Haley, 2013

## Summary

**Creator:** United States Sanitary Commission

**Title:** United States Sanitary Commission records. Department of North Carolina archives

**Date:** 1862-1865

**Size:** 3.19 linear feet (8 boxes)

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

**Abstract:** The USSC's Department of North Carolina was based in the Union-occupied town of New Bern from 1862-1865. Its main functions were the distribution of supplies to area military hospitals, and the provision of special relief services to individual soldiers and civilians in need, including local refugees and former prisoners-of-war. The Archives include letters and reports of relief agents, a journal of Department Inspector J.W. Page, camp inspection returns, inventories of supplies issued, and reports of sick and wounded soldiers in army hospitals.

**Preferred citation:** United States Sanitary Commission records. Department of North Carolina archives, Manuscripts and Archives Division, The New York Public Library

**Processing note:** Compiled by Melissa Haley, 2013 Revised December 2013

**Related Materials:**

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## Creator History

The USSC's Department of North Carolina was based in the Union-occupied town of New Bern, from 1862-1865. Led primarily by Dr. J.W. (Jesse William) Page (1820-1888), Inspector, the Department's main functions were issuing supplies to area military hospitals, and providing special relief services to individual soldiers and civilians in need, including local refugees and former prisoners-of-war. It also monitored the condition of the troops, and reported on the status of sick and wounded soldiers in hospitals.

The department began its activity in February of 1862, when the USSC appointed Dr. Page to accompany the North Carolina Expeditionary Force, led by Gen. Ambrose Burnside, along the eastern coast of the state. Page traveled with the expedition to Roanoke Island in February, and later established a base for the Commission in New Bern after it came under Union control in mid-March. The department distributed supplies to area hospitals throughout 1862, assisting soldiers involved in the Burnside Expedition and Foster's Raid at Goldsboro in December.

The field of operations for the Department of North Carolina from 1862 to early 1865 extended from New Bern to Beaufort and Morehead City on the coast, and (depending on military activity) north and east to Washington, Plymouth, Roanoke Island, Cape Hatteras, Ocracoke, and Coinjock. The main hospitals served over the course of the war were Foster General and Stanley Hospitals in New Bern (the two merged during the war), Mansfield in Morehead City, and Hammond in Beaufort. The department also supplied various regimental hospitals; the naval hospital, navy ships in port, and hospital transport ships; the small pox, yellow fever and "contraband" hospitals; and, later, Lenoir in Kinston, as its geographical scope expanded in the final weeks of the war.

As the war progressed, the Department of North Carolina became increasingly involved in the special relief efforts of aiding refugees, as well as former prisoners-of-war, while continuing to supply area hospitals. In May of 1863, the New Bern Board of Health appealed to the USSC for assistance in caring for the sick and destitute black refugees who had been steadily arriving in town. Although the Commission felt that the care of "contrabands" should fall to the government, it authorized Page to help the board, with Henry Whitney Bellows stating "when common humanity is suffering, we do not under any circumstances wish to hoard our stores" (NC document 84). In the spring of 1864, the battle of Plymouth, and the burning and evacuation of the town of Washington by Federal troops, created an influx of thousands of local refugees into New Bern, many of whom were related to members of the 1st and 2nd North Carolina Union Volunteers. In addition to his duties with the USSC, Dr. Page was appointed Superintendant of White Refugees by Gen. Innis Newton Palmer in May 1864 (with permission from the Washington Office). Page's refugee office was adjacent to the Sanitary Commission's headquarters in town--one of several examples of the close working relationship between the federal government and the Commission in New Bern. Relief supplies were furnished by the USSC, and Page also assisted widows of soldiers with pension claims. Additional special relief was provided to escaped prisoners-of-war, who began to arrive regularly in New Bern from prisons in South Carolina and Georgia in 1864.

The cultivation of a small garden plot by Page in the fall of 1863 led to a larger, successful effort to provide local hospitals, and sometimes naval forces, with fresh, locally-grown vegetables. Beginning in early 1864, the Commission worked along with federal forces in New Bern to develop numerous gardens in the area. A 40+ acre "Hospital Farm" was created outside of town, as well as numerous "Hospital Gardens," in addition to the USSC's 10 acre plot. Many hospitals, regiments, and individual soldiers planted gardens, often with seeds furnished by the Commission. The government detailed several soldiers to work the farm and garden plots.

The prevalence of various diseases created difficulties at times for the department. In September and October of 1864, a major yellow fever outbreak in New Bern effectively shut down much of the town and hindered the USSC's work. Dr. Page was one of the few Commission workers who escaped the fever. Army personnel, including medical staff, were depleted during the outbreak, which killed around 1300 people. In addition, the department had to regularly deal with the presence of scurvy, malaria, and other diseases.

A large portion of the Sanitary Commission's work in North Carolina was conducted in 1865, when its

field of operation expanded to the south and west as more of the state came under Union control during the Carolinas Campaign. Gen. William T. Sherman arrived with his troops in March, following their lengthy trek through Georgia and South Carolina. Several engagements with the Confederates followed in March and April as the Federal army advanced, and the USSC sent relief agents to the front to assist with supplying the wounded. Temporary depots were constructed at Kinston, Goldsboro, Raleigh, Core Creek, Dover Station, and Burnt Mill Creek. In addition, the department expanded to include Wilmington, which the Union captured in February. The USSC established a supply depot there to assist with sick and wounded soldiers (mostly from General Alfred Howe Terry's campaign), and, especially, recently-liberated Union prisoners-of-war, who were in great need of clothing, blankets, and other articles.

Following the end of the war in April, the department continued to distribute supplies, especially providing individual relief to discharged soldiers and former POWs. Clothing remained a particular need, as well as vegetables to combat scurvy. While depots at Raleigh and Goldsboro were closed, the Commission opened a new depot in June in Greensboro to assist troops there and at Lexington, Concord, Salisbury, and Charlotte. Work also continued at Wilmington until July. Headquarters at New Bern remained open until December, 1865. The department's records were submitted to the Historical Bureau by Dr. Page in August, 1866. Page served as a pension agent for the U.S. Government in New Bern from 1865 to 1867.

Over its nearly-four-year existence, the Department of North Carolina consisted of approximately 12 paid relief agents (including Dr. Page's brother, George B. Page), plus temporary workers; soldiers detailed by the government, especially for garden work; and women who served as the "extra-diet corps" in hospitals at busy times. The department generally reported to the Washington Office and communicated with the New York Office about supplies; its major USSC supply sources were New England Women's Auxiliary Association (NEWAA) and Woman's Central Association of Relief (WCAR).

Besides overseeing the Department of North Carolina for most of its existence, Dr. Page occasionally had additional duties within the USSC. In the fall of 1862, he traveled to Alexandria, Virginia to inspect hospitals and report on the feasibility of establishing a Commission depot there. In the spring of 1863, Page was directed to temporarily take over the USSC's newly-formed Department of the South, based in Beaufort, South Carolina, before handing control over to Dr. M. M. Marsh. Page's brother, George B. Page, was in charge at New Bern during his absence in South Carolina.

In July 1864, the Commission's Executive Board voted to relieve Dr. Page from duty with the Department of North Carolina, the apparent cause being failure to make regular reports. Effective August 1, Dr. Page was replaced by George B. Page. In March 1865, the doctor was reinstated as Inspector. During the period of yellow fever outbreak in the fall of 1864, Dr. Page took charge of the department while his brother was incapacitated.

## **Scope and Content Note**

The Department of North Carolina Archives include letters and reports, camp inspection returns, hospital reports, garden and farm records, supply records, and journals, documenting the workings of the department from 1862-1865, especially its supply distribution and relief efforts for soldiers and refugees in the New Bern area and eastern North Carolina. The records also reflect the Commission's functions of monitoring the condition of troops, and reporting the status of sick and wounded soldiers in hospitals.

Records from 1862 to early 1865 mostly pertain to the day-to-day activities of the department, which

focused primarily on the distribution of supplies to area general, regimental, and other hospitals; to individuals in need including soldiers, refugees, former prisoners-of-war, and discharged soldiers; and occasionally to hospital transport ships and navy vessels. Documents also illustrate the department's cooperation and work with the federal government, as well as internal USSC activities and procedures. Some correspondence and reports reflect the threatening presence of nearby military actions and disease. In addition, the Commission's functions of monitoring the condition of the troops and reporting the status of sick and wounded soldiers in hospitals are demonstrated in letters and reports, camp inspection returns, and weekly hospital reports listing soldiers admitted and released in hospitals mainly in New Bern, Morehead City, and Beaufort.

Numerous items, including reports and supply records, concern activities during the spring of 1865, when Sherman's troops moved through the state and the Department of North Carolina expanded its field of operation in the final months of the war.

Most documents in this record group were numbered by the USSC following the submission of records to the Archives in August, 1866. These documents are listed in numerical order and briefly described in the USSC New York, N.Y. Archives, Historical Bureau, Archives Department register Volume 12.

## Container List

### I. Letters and reports 1862-1865

Letters and reports pertain to supplies requested, received, and distributed; area hospitals; relief agents' activities in the field; cooperation and work with the federal government; general USSC procedures and actions; local battles, wounded soldiers, and military activities; work with refugees; the whereabouts of individual soldiers; soldiers' bodies; the USSC's Department of the South (based in South Carolina); yellow fever; assistance for Sherman's troops starting in Feb 1865; and post-war work with soldiers and former POWs. Also present are a small amount of copies of Inspector J.W. Page's outgoing correspondence and reports, as well as some bills, telegrams, and testimonials from army doctors about the USSC's work in North Carolina.

Correspondence within the USSC is mostly from the Washington Office (especially J. Foster Jenkins), the Woman's Central Association of Relief, the New England Woman's Auxiliary Association, and the Hospital Directory.

Letters and reports are roughly chronological.

#114-117, 212-216, 410-444 were listed by the USSC as destroyed; #33-34, 210-211 were not found during processing.

- b. 1 f. 1-9      **#1-113** 1862 Feb-1863 Dec
- b. 1 f. 10-14      **#134-209** 1864 Oct-Dec, 1864-1865
- b. 1 f. 15-17      **#242-275** 1865 Jan-Mar
- b. 2 f. 1-15      **#276-409** 1865 Mar-Dec, 1864
- b. 2 f. 16      **#482** 1863-1865  
Telegrams, the bulk of which regard relief agent travel, and the movement of supplies.
- b. 3 f. 1-3      **II. Camp inspection returns** 1862 Mar-1863 Oct

Camp inspection surveys #217-231 completed by J.W. Page for regimental camps within the Department's field of operations, using USSC forms A and 19A. (Some are not signed by Page, but are in his hand.)

### III. Hospital reports 1863-1865

Weekly reports ("Report of Sick and Wounded Soldiers in U.S. Army Hospital at \_\_\_\_ for the week ending \_\_\_\_") of hospitals in New Bern (Foster and Stanley), Morehead City (Mansfield), and Beaufort (Hammond) of soldiers admitted and released (also a small amount from Lenoir in Kinston). Reports were organized by hospital and bundled by month (approximately), then numbered. Arrangement within particular hospitals is usually chronological. Unnumbered bundles found within numbered hospital reports are filed within appropriate locations. Unnumbered reports that were stored separately and identified as "not entered" are filed at the end of hospital reports.

Also present are several lists of hospital personnel in New Bern (medical staff and soldiers detailed for hospital work), filed at the end of New Bern.

#238, 454, 464-469, 471 not found

#### New Bern 1863-1865

- b. 3 f. 4-12      **#118-128** 1863 Feb-Jul
- b. 4 f. 1-5      **#129-133** 1863 Aug-1864 Jan
- b. 4 f. 6-12      **#232-237** 1864 Jan-Jul
- b. 5 f. 1-3      **#239-241** 1864 Sep-Dec
- b. 5 f. 4      **#480** 1865 Jan
- b. 5 f. 5      Unnumbered 1865 Mar
- b. 5 f. 6      Personnel lists 1863

#### Morehead City 1863-1865

III. Hospital reports (cont.)  
 Morehead City (cont.)

- b. 5 f. 7-20 **#449-463** 1863 Sep-1864 Nov
- b. 5 f. 21 **Unnumbered** 1865 Mar
- b. 6 f. 1-9 **Beaufort (#470-479)** 1864 Apr-1865 Jan
- b. 6 f. 10 **Kinston (#481)** 1865 Mar

**Unnumbered** 1864-1865

Contains weekly hospital reports that were stored separately and identified as "not entered" by the USSC. Those for New Bern fill a gap in the chronology of numbered documents; a set of reports from multiple locations (New Bern, Morehead City and Beaufort) roughly duplicates those found in numbered hospital reports.

- b. 6 f. 11-14 **New Bern** 1864 Sep-Nov
- b. 6 f. 15-17 **Multiple locations** 1864 Nov-1865 Jan

- b. 6 f. 18 **IV. Garden and farm records** 1864 May-1865 Aug

Includes multiple small volumes (some disbound), memoranda, and correspondence relating to the USSC hospital garden and farm in the New Bern area. Information includes yields, recipients of garden vegetables; general totals of requisitions filled; accounts of produce; tasks (plantings, etc.); and notes on personnel, tools, and seeds.

**V. Supply records** 1862-1865

The bulk of Department of North Carolina volumes record supplies issued, primarily in the New Bern area, to general, regimental, and other hospitals and to individual soldiers, sailors, and civilians in need. Entries generally include date, recipient, and quantities and type of stock issued. Most supply record books contain a few scattered instances of supplies received. Entries are usually in chronological order. Many supply entries contain issue or requisition numbers that do not appear to connect to other material in the collection. Also present are mixed-use volumes containing journals and supplies issued, as well as one journal, in the hand of Dr. J.W. Page. Volumes are arranged chronologically by first date.

Supply records also contain tabulated statements of issues and a few miscellaneous items concerning supplies that were loose and unnumbered in the record group.

- b. 7 **Supplies issued and journal** 1862 Mar-1863 Mar
- v. 1 The majority of the volume records supplies issued 1862 Mar 24-Nov 2, primarily in the New Bern area. The volume was also used as a journal by J.W. Page. Entries for 1862 Dec 8-1863 Mar 7, record his activities and tasks. The journal begins on the last page of the volume, running in reverse direction.
- b. 7 f. 1 **Supplies issued and received** 1862 Mar-Jul
- The bulk is supplies issued 1862 Mar 25-Jul 10, primarily in the New Bern area. Entries for shipments of supplies received 1862 Mar 26-Jun 26 include name of shipper or transport, date, box number, and list of contents.
- b. 7 **Journal and supplies issued** 1862 Sep-1863 Mar
- v. 2 The volume includes the journal of a stay by J.W. Page in Alexandria, Virginia, 1862 Sep 11-Oct 2, recording visits to hospitals, issues of supplies and other activities on behalf of the USSC, as well as a record of supplies issued and received in the New Bern area, 1862 Nov 19-1863 Mar 24. Journal entries for Sep 1862 beginning from the back of the volume concern Alexandria, followed by entries for late Nov 1862, listing Union regiments with chief personnel.
- b. 7 **Journal** 1863-1864
- v. 3 J.W. Page's journal of daily activities and tasks, 1864 Jan 1-Jul 2; also includes a "Meteorological Register" (2 pp.) for 1863 Feb-Mar 6, recording weather conditions at New Bern.
- b. 7 **Supplies issued** 1863 Nov 2-1864 May 18
- v. 4 Also includes detailed lists of Sanitary Bulletin distribution.
- b. 7 f. 2 **Supplies issued** 1864 Apr 4-Aug 15
- Includes issues to refugees from Plymouth and Washington (mostly women and children).
- b. 7 f. 3 **Supplies issued** 1864 Aug 15-1865 Feb 18
- Includes issues to escaped prisoners-of-war.

V. Supply records (cont.)

- b. 7 f. 4 **Supplies issued 1865 Feb 2-Nov 27**  
 Includes issues to soldiers from Sherman's army, escaped prisoners-of-war; also to the Christian Commission and other organizations (including Freedman's Bureau). Volume also contains a few inventories of supplies shipped to Raleigh and Wilmington.
- b. 7 **Supplies issued in the field 1865 Mar 8-Apr 20**
- v. 5 Issues from depots at Core Creek and Kinston to hospitals and individual soldiers in the area, including Goldsboro and Dover Station.
- b. 7 **Supplies issued in the field 1865 Apr-Jun**
- v. 6 Issues by relief agent George B. Page from depots at Goldsboro 1865 Apr 20-May 10 and Raleigh 1865 Apr 22-Jun 3.
- b. 8 **Tabulated statements of issues 1863-1865**  
 Rolled statements of supply issues in New Bern, Goldsboro, Raleigh, and field depots, which include types and quantities of stock, to whom issued, and number of requisitions. Recipients include regiments, hospitals, steamers, individual relief, refugees, and others. Most statements are approximately 43" x 17." Item 448 not found.
- b. 8 **Issues in the field #445 1865 Mar**  
 Two duplicate statements of supplies issued at Core Creek, Burnt Mill Station, Dover Station, Kinston, and Goldsboro.
- b. 8 **Issues at Goldsboro and Raleigh #446 1865 Apr-Jun**  
 Five statements
- b. 8 **Issues at New Bern #447 1863-1865**  
 Seven statements including one for Foster Hospital. Undated statements appear to be for 1864.
- b. 7 f. 5 **Miscellaneous documents 1863-1865**