



Historical Society of Cheshire County

Collecting, preserving and communicating the history of Cheshire County

Helping Those in Need During the Civil War by Executive Director Alan F. Rumrill

Cheshire Co. Soldiers' Aid Society,

To day the demands upon us are greater than ever before. The great battles that are now transpiring and filling the hospitals with the wounded and dying, demand the efforts of all. Daily and hourly our friends at and near Washington, are witnessing scenes of horror and distress that are beyond description. Because we are mercifully spared their bitter experience, shall we, can we, become cold and indifferent? We again make an appeal in behalf of our nearly exhausted Treasury, and trust that it will meet with a willing and hearty response.

It is earnestly requested that the various religious Congregations in Keene and vicinity, be invited to contribute in aid of said Society, ~~on~~ such early day as their respective Pastors may designate.

SUSANNA THOMPSON, Secretary.

Keene, N.H.

As we hear about people donating supplies and volunteering to help during the current outbreak, it is interesting to look back at historical examples of similar support during difficult times. One such time was the American Civil War. Cheshire County and New Hampshire residents wanted to offer what support they could to their friends, relatives and other local residents serving in the military.

Almost every local town organized soldiers' aid societies to make and provide supplies that were not always readily available on the battlefield or in military camps, or simply to give the troops a feeling of home. For example, these groups were an important source of bandages for use on the battlefield.

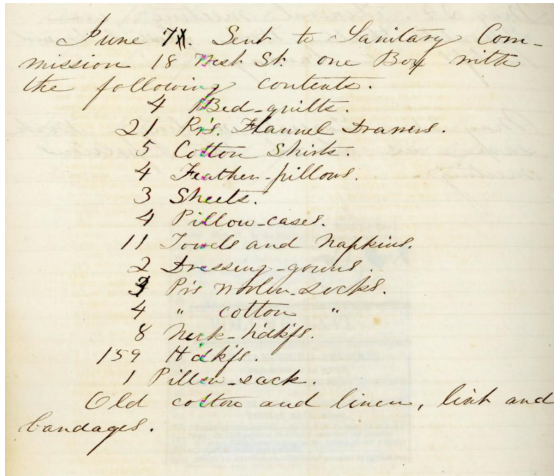
The records of several of these societies still survive, offering insight into their support for the war effort. Much of their work involved making bandages, towels, pillowcases, shirts, robes, soap, and other supplies for use in hospitals, but they also sent canned food and other supplies as well. The Cheshire County Soldiers' Aid Society, based in Keene, served as a clearinghouse for many of the other local organizations, receiving their contributions and sending them on to the New Hampshire regiments. During one week early in the war, the group forwarded more than 2500 items on to the troops. The Keene group met weekly to make bandages and prepare aid boxes. This group alone sent 6,000 items to aid the soldiers during the war.

The items supplied by the society in Sullivan, NH offer a good view of the variety and quantity of material that the small towns were volunteering to provide for the military. The Sullivan society made 572 pairs of stockings, 41 pairs of mittens, 57 quilts and blankets, 130 sheets, 146 shirts, 310 towels and handkerchiefs, 35 pillows, 106 pillowcases, 14 bed sacks, 13 dressing gowns, and many slippers. They also sent out hundreds of pounds of apples, cherries, blackberries, jelly, pickles, preserves, bottles of wines, large quantities of bandages, and \$553 in cash.

The United States has a long history of residents volunteering and offering support in

times of drastic need. Then, as now, people compassionately volunteered their time and donated supplies to make the work of those in the medical field easier and to help the nation through challenging times.

Kindest regards and stay safe.



June 7th. Sent to Sanitary Commission 18 Med. St. one Box with the following contents.

- 4 Bed-quilt.
- 21 Pk. Manual Frames.
- 5 Cotton Shirts.
- 4 Feather-pillows.
- 3 Sheets.
- 4 Pillow-cases.
- 11 Towels and Napkins.
- 2 Dressing-gowns.
- 3 Pk. Woolen Socks.
- 4 " Cotton "
- 8 Neck-tie.
- 159 Hdkfs.
- 1 Pillow-sack.

Old cotton and linen, lint and bandages.

The Cheshire County Society sent these items to the U.S. Sanitary Commission on June 7, 1863



A sample of patriotic calico used by the Cheshire County Soldiers Aid Society to make hospital supplies for NH Civil War soldiers

Many people have kindly wondered how they can help the Historical Society of Cheshire County make it through this crucial time. Please consider making a donation at <https://hsccnh.org/support/donate/>. Your generosity will help sustain us until we can open our doors to the public once again.

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