

**The New York Public Library
Stephen A. Schwarzman Building
Manuscripts and Archives Division**

Guide to the

United States Sanitary Commission records

1861-1878 (bulk 1861-1872)

MssCol 3101

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The conservation, arrangement and description of a significant portion of the collection was made possible by generous funding from the Robert W. Wilson Charitable Trust.

Summary

Creator: United States Sanitary Commission

Title: United States Sanitary Commission records, 1861-1878 (bulk 1861-1872)

Size: 2,121 boxes, 377 volumes

Source: Gift of the United States Sanitary Commission to the Astor Library, January 1879.

Preferred citation: United States Sanitary Commission records, Manuscripts and Archives Division, The New York Public Library

Creator history

The United States Sanitary Commission (USSC), 1861-1879, was a civilian organization authorized by the United States government to provide medical and sanitary assistance to the Union volunteer forces during the United States Civil War (1861-1865). As the USSC broadened the scope of its work during the war, Regular troops, sailors and others also benefited from its services. The USSC wrapped up its war relief operations in the fall of 1865. At that time it established an Historical Bureau to collect, arrange and preserve its records, which would also serve as a documentary resource for planned publications on historical and scientific topics. Some special relief operations, such as the running of employment bureaus and homes for disabled soldiers and sailors, continued until early 1866. The USSC's Army and Navy Claim Agency, which helped soldiers, sailors and their family members to file pension and other claims with the government without charge, ceased accepting new claims as of January 1, 1866. Its agents continued to process existing applications until approximately 1870. The Statistical Bureau prepared monograph reports on its findings through 1868. By 1872, the Historical Bureau had completed two arrangements of its records, which had been collected or submitted on a rolling basis. The Sanitary Commission remained relatively dormant until 1878, when its Standing Committee authorized a third and final arrangement of its records, and a complete statement of its financial accounts from 1861-1878. USSC President Henry W. Bellows officially brought its work to a close on January 7, 1879.

The USSC's roots lay in the collaborative efforts of New York City's civic leaders, medical community, and particularly the Woman's Central Association of Relief to channel the public's outpouring of support and concern for the troops in ways most useful to the government and the military at the start of the war in April 1861.

A delegation to Washington in May, 1861 representing these groups led to the appointment of “A Commission of Inquiry and Advice in respect of the Sanitary Interests of the United States Forces” to work in collaboration with the War Department and Medical Bureau, as ordered by the Secretary of War on June 9, 1861, and approved by President Lincoln on June 13. The commission was named the United States Sanitary Commission and officers were elected from among its members. Reverend Henry W. Bellows, a Unitarian minister and vice-president of the Woman’s Central Association of Relief, served as president, Alexander Dallas Bache as vice-president, and George Templeton Strong as treasurer. Frederick Law Olmsted was hired as general secretary. The Sanitary Commission was empowered to inquire and advise as to matters concerning the health and sanitary condition of the volunteer forces; their general comfort and efficiency; the provision of cooks, nurses and hospitals; and “other subjects of like nature.” The Commission received further endorsement by order of the U.S. Army Surgeon General on June 15.

The USSC did not receive funding from the federal government. Its work was supported by donations of cash and supplies from supporters at home and abroad. Insurance companies were solicited. Soldiers’ aid societies collected supplies and funds, and Sanitary Fairs were held in major metropolitan areas. Substantial funds were raised by Western states and territories, notably the California. Donations were also received from supporters around the world.

It was a guiding principle of the USSC that it should work only to supplement, not supplant or compete with, the work of the government. The Commission began its work investigating the condition of the troops. Its members formed committees to conduct camp and hospital inspections, collect statistics, and prepare reports on sanitary practice, preparation of food, and the quality of supplies. In the early months of its investigations, the Sanitary Commission looked carefully at the lessons of the Crimean War, when British forces lost many men to disease caused by unsanitary conditions.

The Commissioners, who formed what was initially described as an executive board or legislative council, met on a quarterly basis throughout the war to review submitted reports and to set general policy. The Board usually met in Washington, D.C. Once military actions began and the USSC added relief work to its sanitary inspection work across great geographical distances, the committee structure was gradually replaced by an executive administrative structure.

The demands of the war also created a need for more frequent decision-making. This led to the creation of the Standing Committee, which met on a nearly-daily basis in New York City where most of its members resided. The Standing Committee initially consisted of five Commissioners who retained their position for the entire war: Rev. Henry W. Bellows, George Templeton Strong, William H. Van Buren, M. D., Cornelius R. Agnew, M.D., and Wolcott Gibbs. Charles J. Stillé, Esq., of Philadelphia joined the Standing Committee in 1864. Their decisions were implemented and were informed by the general secretary, who in turn worked with the associate secretary of the East (Eastern Department), based in Washington, D.C., and the associate secretary of the West (Western Department), based in Louisville, Kentucky. Van Buren, Agnew and Gibbs also formed the USSC’s Medical Committee. They directed inquiries and projects on medical, surgical, sanitary and other scientific topics, including the publication of professional papers during and after the war. Committee members also engaged in USSC efforts to modernize and reform the Army Medical Bureau in the early years of the war. USSC Commissioner Elisha Harris, M.D., worked closely with them.

The general secretary and the associate secretary of the East were located at the USSC’s Washington headquarters at 244 F Street. In the fall of 1863, Olmsted resigned as general secretary, and was replaced by J. Foster Jenkins, who served in that position until the spring of 1865. The USSC

implemented a major executive restructuring following Olmsted's departure.

John S. Newberry, M.D., was associate secretary of the West throughout the war. (The Western Department should not be confused with the Western Sanitary Commission, an independent organization that declined to join the USSC. Its headquarters was located in St. Louis, Missouri.) The associate secretaries were responsible for the general supervision of regional offices and departments, supply depots and special relief services in their geographical territory. They made sure the supply needs of inspectors and relief agents serving with the Armies in the field were met, and coordinated operations at major battles. Louisville and Washington were also the location of the USSC's two largest supply depots.

A third associate secretary position was later created for the chief of inspection, who oversaw a network of chief inspectors, relief agents and supply depots that operated within or near military lines. The inspectors and relief agents accompanied particular Army units on the march as well as units sent by sea on special expeditions. Once a military presence was established in an area, the USSC set up more permanent quarters. USSC inspectors of U.S. Army General Hospitals and Naval hospitals also reported to the chief of inspection.

The central administration was supported by the work of its branch offices. The USSC provided hospital supplies, clothing and food contributed by aid societies, which were channeled geographically through large branch offices across the Union to major USSC supply depots. The branches were semi-independent regional offices with their own administration under the direction of the USSC. It was believed that donations and supplies could more effectively be raised through local efforts, and distributed more efficiently according to need by a central bureaucracy in official communication with the government. There were also branches located in London, England and Paris, France. Women's branches such as the Woman's Central Association of Relief, the New England Women's Auxiliary Association and the Pennsylvania Women's Branch worked closely with the USSC offices in their cities – the New York Office, the Philadelphia Agency, and the Executive Committee of Boston Associates.

The Board and Standing Committee relied on an enforced system of regional and functional reporting to maintain control and communication, and to formulate policy. The number of employees on the Commission's roster varied from roughly one hundred fifty to seven hundred, the average number being about three hundred. While some men and women, at all levels of service, preferred to work on a volunteer basis, as a rule officers and employees received salaries as a matter of policy to ensure accountability and consistency in the work force. As Charles J. Stillé wrote, their work was "too full of toil, drudgery and repulsive reality," especially in the field, to be sustained solely by volunteer workers.

The collection of statistics was instrumental to the USSC's work. USSC inspectors conducted camp and hospital inspections, reporting their findings according to specially prepared questionnaires. They also collected information on the physical condition and social background of volunteer soldiers. This information was submitted to the USSC's Statistical Bureau which compiled abstracts from the data to make recommendations for sanitary policy and other studies. The Statistical Bureau was headed by E. B. Elliott, and later by Benjamin A. Gould. It reported directly to the general secretary.

The scope of the USSC's work grew as the war progressed. It worked with the military to improve transportation of the sick and wounded. It staffed hospital steamers and other ships, some provided by the Quartermaster General, to transport the wounded. It developed special railway cars and ambulances, and used refrigerated rail transport to bring fresh food to hospitals after major battles such as Gettysburg. The USSC created several large 'hospital gardens' during the war to provide fresh vegetables for patients and for troops in the field, to battle the spread of scurvy.

The USSC's circulars, broadsides, pamphlets and publications such as the Sanitary Reporter (in the West) and the Sanitary Bulletin (in the East) were vitally important in keeping the public aware and supportive of its work. Agents traveled throughout the country giving lectures and fundraising. The USSC published medical and surgical essays on topics such as scurvy, dysentery, and amputation for free distribution to military medical personnel. The USSC made use of photography during and after the war to support its work and document its achievements.

USSC agents engaged in general, or field relief, attended to the needs of troops on the march. Battlefield relief consisted of transporting and providing extra medical supplies at times of battle and caring for the wounded on the field. Often the lines between these two categories blurred. Out of this work, and in addition to it, grew the USSC's Auxiliary Relief Corps (1864) whose workers provided feeding stations for soldiers in transit to and from hospitals, assisted sick soldiers in hospital with letter-writing and other personal needs, and attended to the wounded arriving in ambulances. The USSC's Special Relief Department, established at the beginning of the war and directed by Frederick N. Knapp, ran a network of soldiers' homes and lodges, usually at transit points, which provided food and shelter to sick, wounded or exhausted soldiers on their way to or from home, camp, regiment, or hospital. USSC agents were also stationed at large convalescent camps to assist soldiers with health needs, letter-writing, and paper work concerning discharge, sick pay, and other claims. The exposure to disease and incessant overwork resulted in death or lifelong illness for a number of USSC relief workers, including both men and women.

The USSC established the Hospital Directory in 1862 to collect and record information concerning the location of sick and wounded soldiers in U.S. Army general hospitals, and to provide that information to the public. Its four offices in Washington, DC; Louisville, KY; Philadelphia, PA, and New York, NY also gathered information from other hospitals and locations, and searched for soldiers who had lost contact with family and friends. Hospital patient data was also used by the Statistical Bureau for the evaluation of medical performance.

Assisting soldiers and their families, without charge, to fill out the proper government forms to obtain back pay, pensions, bounty and prize monies became an increasingly important part of the USSC's special relief work. In 1864, it formed the United States Sanitary Commission Army & Navy Claim Agency in Washington, DC to better organize its work. Local claim agencies such as the Protective War Claim Association of the State of New York, located in Manhattan, and the Protective War Claim and Pension Agency, located in Philadelphia, were part of the USSC network of local agents forwarding claims to the central office in Washington for processing with the government.

When the war ended in April, 1865, the USSC continued much needed relief work with returning prisoners of war, discharged soldiers, and those remaining in hospitals. By July, branches were bringing their work to a close. Active relief work related to the war ceased officially on October 1, 1865.

The post-war years of the USSC saw continued activity. Branches continued to tie up loose ends and to prepare their records for shipment to the USSC's Historical Bureau. The Historical Bureau (1865-1868) was established in New York City to arrange, catalog, and preserve the records for future use by the public, and to aid in the preparation of several planned histories of the USSC's war work. The Medical Committee, under the direction of Elisha Harris, M.D., collected documentation for histories of war-time medical, surgical, and sanitary practice, while others worked on histories of statistical, special relief, and other USSC activities.

The USSC Army & Navy Claim Agency and the Protective War Claim agencies in New York and Philadelphia stopped accepting new claims in 1866, but continued working on pending cases and brought most work to a close by 1870. Their records were among the last to be received by the Sanitary Commission.

Also during this period, USSC officers and former associates such as Rev. Henry W. Bellows and Frederick Law Olmsted established the American Association for the Relief of the Misery of Battle Fields (1866-1870) as the first American branch of the Comité International de Secours aux Militaires Blessés, later known as the Red Cross. The records of the AARMBF are found in the records of the United States Sanitary Commission.

John S. Blatchford, general secretary from 1865 to the early 1870s, remained actively engaged in supervising the collection and arrangement of records, supervising the publications, and handling any pending business under the direction of the Standing Committee, which held its final meeting in 1878. Rev. Henry W. Bellows, president of the USSC since 1861, officially brought its affairs to a close on 7 January 1879 with the formal transfer of its records to the Astor Library.

Arrangement

The United States Sanitary Commission records are organized into the following series:

- I. Accounts and Vouchers archives
- II. American Association for the Relief of the Misery of Battle Fields archives
- III. Army and Navy Claim Agency Archives
- IV. Army of the Potomac Archives
- V. California Branch Archives
- VI. Condensed Historical Matter
- VII. Department of North Carolina Archives
- VIII. Department of the Gulf Archives
- IX. Department of Shenandoah Archives
- X. English Branch Archives
- XI. Executive Committee of Boston Associate Archives
- XII. Hospital Directory Archives
- XIII. Maryland Archives
- XIV. New England Women's Auxiliary Association Archives
- XV. New York, N.Y. Archives
- XVI. Pennsylvania Archives
- XVII. Statistical Bureau Archives
- XVIII. Washington D.C. Archives
- XIX. Western Department Archives
- XX. Woman's Central Association of Relief

Key terms

Subjects

Military service, Voluntary
Prisoners of war -- Health and hygiene -- United States
Public health -- United States

Names

Agnew, Cornelius Rea, 1830-1888
Bache, A. D. (Alexander Dallas), 1806-1867
Bellows, Henry W. (Henry Whitney), 1814-1882
Blatchford, John S.
Brady, Mathew B., 1823 (ca.)-1896
Douglas, John Hancock, 1824-1892
Elliott, E. B. (Ezekiel Brown), 1823-1888
Gibbs, Wolcott, 1822-1908
Gould, Benjamin A. (Benjamin Apthorp), 1787-1859
Harris, Elisha, 1824-1884
Jenkins, John Foster.
Knapp, Frederick Newman.
Newberry, J. S. (John Strong), 1822-1892
Olmsted, Frederick Law, 1822-1903
Schuyler, Louisa Lee.
Stillé, Charles J. (Charles Janeway), 1819-1899
Strong, George Templeton, 1820-1875

Places

United States -- Armed Forces -- Medical care
United States -- History -- Civil War, 1861-1865 -- Campaigns
United States -- History -- Civil War, 1861-1865 -- Civilian relief
United States -- History -- Civil War, 1861-1865 -- Claims
United States -- History -- Civil War, 1861-1865 -- Confiscations and contributions
United States -- History -- Civil War, 1861-1865 -- Equipment and supplies
United States -- History -- Civil War, 1861-1865 -- Health aspects
United States -- History -- Civil War, 1861-1865 -- Hospitals
United States -- History -- Civil War, 1861-1865 -- Medical care
United States -- History -- Civil War, 1861-1865 -- Participation, Afro-American
United States -- History -- Civil War, 1861-1865 -- Participation, Female
United States -- History -- Civil War, 1861-1865 -- Participation, Indians of North America

United States Sanitary Commission.
Van Buren, W. H. (William Holme), 1819-1883

Special formats

Diaries
Illustrations
Maps
Photographs
Posters
Scrapbooks

United States -- History -- Civil War, 1861-1865 --
Personal narratives
United States -- History -- Civil War, 1861-1865 --
Prisoners and prisons
United States -- History -- Civil War, 1861-1865 --
Registers
United States -- History -- Civil War, 1861-1865 --
Societies
United States -- History -- Civil War, 1861-1865 --
War work
United States -- History -- Civil War, 1861-1865 --
Women

Record Groups

I. Accounts and Vouchers archives, 1861-1878 (105 boxes, 21 volumes)

The Accounts and Vouchers Archive, 1861-1878, comprise financial records of New York and Washington offices; records submitted to those offices by local agencies, branches and subordinate departments; and rosters of USSC staff. The bulk of the records are monthly cash accounts, consisting statements of receipts and expenditures, accompanying vouchers and staff rosters, which were required to be submitted to accounting staff in Washington or New York. Account books, bank books, miscellaneous accounts for staff members and particular operations, and occasional correspondence are also found. Records of the New York and Washington offices include their own monthly cash accounts, account books and comparative statements of receipts and disbursements for New York, Louisville and Washington operations. New York records also contain correspondence and records of the Commission's treasurer, George T. Strong, and lists of financial contributions received at New York and Washington, as well as an 1878 financial account of the Commission's work from 1861 to that date. Washington records include accounts for the Central Office, Special Relief Department, and Agency for the Purchase of Fresh Hospital Supplies. Records of local or subordinate USSC entities are arranged alphabetically by name or place name. Accounts and Voucher materials were selectively removed from individual record groups and placed in this newly created record group during the USSC's last post-war arrangement of its records. Some financial materials, mainly cash books, remain in their original locations; numerous vouchers, receipts and like materials were destroyed.

II. American Association for the Relief of the Misery of Battle Fields archives, 1866-1871 (1 box)

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.

III. Army and Navy Claim Agency Archives, 1861-1870 (1,190 boxes, 46 volumes)

The United States Sanitary Commission established the Army and Navy Claim Agency (ANCA) in Washington, D.C. on April 1, 1864 to serve as the USSC's central office to assist Union soldiers, sailors, and their families in prosecuting claims on the federal government for pensions, back pay, bounty, commutation of rations, prize money, and other benefits, without cost. The Archives comprise the records of the Army and Navy Claim Agency; the records of the Pension Agency, its predecessor organization; the registers and cash books of its subsidiary local agencies; and the records of two quasi-independent USSC claim agencies whose origins predate the establishment of the Army and Navy Claim Agency: the Protective War Claim Association of the State of New York, located in New York City, and the Protective War Claim Agency, located in Philadelphia.

IV. Army of the Potomac Archives, 1862-1865 (29 boxes)

The Army of the Potomac Archives, 1862-1865, document the work of the USSC's Field Relief Corps and Auxiliary Relief Corps in support of the Union Armies on campaign in Virginia. Included are letters, reports and journals of relief agents, camp inspection reports, records of supplies distributed and of soldiers assisted at various homes, lodges, and hospitals at City Point, Aquia Creek, Harrison's Landing, Petersburg, and other USSC stations.

V. California Branch Archives, 1862-1866 (12 boxes, 1 volume)

The California Branch of the United States Sanitary Commission was founded in San Francisco in September, 1862 as the Soldiers' Relief Fund Committee, an independent fundraising organization. It officially became a branch of the USSC in August of 1864. The California Branch Archives contain the correspondence of Branch Secretary O.C. Wheeler, meeting minutes of its Executive Committee, and reports submitted by local aid societies and organizing agents documenting the extensive fundraising network developed throughout California and into neighboring areas. Other records include a draft of a history of the Branch and a scrapbook.

VI. Condensed Historical Matter, 1861-1879 (23 boxes, 87 volumes)

Condensed Historical Matter contains the printed publications, graphics, photographs, and maps collected by the Archive Department, including some materials from the Medical Committee Archives.

VII. Department of North Carolina Archives, 1862-1865 (8 boxes)

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; 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 returns of sick and wounded in army hospitals.

VIII. Department of the Gulf Archives, 1862-1866 (10 boxes, 1 volume)

The USSC's Department of the Gulf was established in New Orleans in 1862. This city became the Department's base for operations for supply distribution and relief efforts in support of soldiers and sailors in military operations along the Gulf Coast, from Texas to Florida, and into the interior of Louisiana. Its agents accompanied troops during the siege of Port Hudson, 1863, and the Red River campaign in 1864, and sailed with hospital ships carrying sick and wounded soldiers up the Mississippi River. In New Orleans, the USSC established a strong presence by distributing numerous supplies to hospitals, regiments and naval ships. Its Soldiers' Home provided food and shelter to soldiers in transit, becoming the hub of special relief services to soldiers and their families, including assistance in filing pension and other claims. The Department of the Gulf Archives, 1862-1866, comprise the records of its main office, notably the correspondence of George A. Blake and Edward A. Crane, who directed Department activities; its Special Relief Department, as seen in correspondence, record books documenting services at the Soldiers Homes in New Orleans and Brashear City, Louisiana, and back pay and bounty books recording claim assistance. Supply Department records document the extensive distribution of supplies in New Orleans and elsewhere, and to relief agents for use in the field. Other materials include receipts, canceled checks and miscellaneous documents.

IX. Department of Shenandoah Archives, 1864-1865 (2 boxes, 1 volume)

The USSC's Department of Shenandoah (also referred to as the Department of West Virginia) was based at Harpers Ferry, West Virginia from spring 1864 to June 1865, under the direction of Superintendent George A. Mühleck. The Department of the Shenandoah Archives, 1864-1865, consist of letters, telegrams, reports from relief agents in the field, departmental orders, hospital reports, stock inventories, financial records, and a register of documents, as well as record books from its agencies in Harpers Ferry, Martinsburg, and Winchester. The records document the Department's efforts to support Union troops through the distribution of supplies and other forms of relief, particularly during the Shenandoah Valley campaigns of 1864.

X. English Branch Archives, 1864-1865 (2 boxes, 1 volume)

The English Branch, which existed from the spring of 1864 to the fall of 1865, was established by Americans living in Britain to gain the support of their compatriots for the work of the USSC and the Union cause. The English Branch Archives document the work of the Branch's secretary and USSC agent in London, E.C. (Edmund Crisp) Fisher, as seen in his incoming and outgoing correspondence, journal with minutes, address book, and scrapbook, as well as a register of letters received, and printed matter.

XI. Executive Committee of Boston Associate Archives, 1861-1866 (7 boxes, 7 volumes)

The Executive Committee of Boston Associates (ECBA) was officially organized on April 1, 1863 as a department of the United States Sanitary Commission's special relief service. It provided transportation, lodging, clothing, meals, medical attention, and aid in obtaining pay for those soldiers in the Boston area who were either discharged, on furlough, sick, or disabled, and in need of assistance. The Executive Committee of Boston Associates archives, 1863-1866, document work of Executive Committee secretaries John S. Blatchford and James Barnard to coordinate and report on the Committees special relief services, including their coordination with the New England Women's Auxiliary Association and other relief organizations, and the work conducted by the superintendent and his staff at the office's relief rooms. Records include correspondence, reports, meeting files, registers identifying services provided to over 50,000 servicemen, additional notes on relief provided, a Hospital Directory register, and a surgical and medical record of soldiers receiving treatment under ECBA's care. Two scrapbooks of newsclippings provide further information on USSC activities in Boston.

XII. Hospital Directory Archives, 1862-1866 (86 boxes, 137 volumes)

The USSC established the Hospital Directory in 1862 to collect and record information concerning the location and condition of sick and wounded soldiers in U.S. Army general hospitals at the home front and in war zones, and to provide that information to the public. Its four offices in Washington, DC, Louisville, Kentucky; Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and New York, New York also gathered information from other hospitals and locations, and searched for soldiers who had lost contact with family and friends. The activities of all four offices are documented in the Hospital Directory Archives, 1862-1866, containing registers of hospital patients; files on individual soldiers containing letters from soldiers' relatives, friends, regimental officers and surgeons, and Hospital Directory staff; lists of deaths, burials, and prisoners of war; and administrative correspondence and record books.

XIII. Maryland Archives, 1862-1865 (13 boxes)

The USSC Maryland Archives contain the records of USSC outposts in Annapolis, Baltimore, Frederick, and Sharpsburg, Maryland. The USSC established offices, storehouses, and homes for soldiers and their relatives in these locations at various times throughout the war.

XIV. New England Women's Auxiliary Association Archives, 1861-1865

(12 boxes, 1 volume)

The New England Women's Auxiliary Association (NEWAA) was established on November 28, 1861 in Boston, Massachusetts as an auxiliary branch to the United States Sanitary Commission (USSC). The New England Women's Auxiliary Association Archives, 1861-1865, consist of the extant records of its Executive Committee, include correspondence, packing lists, record books, and index volumes documenting its efforts to collect and distribute supplies for the USSC, and to spread information about the Commission's work throughout New England, particularly Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, and Vermont.

XV. New York, N.Y. Archives, 1861-1878 (135 boxes, 25 volumes)

The New York, N.Y. Archives, 1861-1878, comprise the records of the USSC's Standing Committee, papers of USSC president Henry W. Bellows, records of the New York Office, and the Historical Bureau. These were brought together by the USSC during the post-war organization of its records to consolidate documentation of the Commission's New York-based activities. Records of the Woman's Central Association of Relief are arranged separately. Records of the Standing Committee records and the papers of Henry W. Bellows include correspondence, minutes, reports and other materials illuminating strategic planning and decision-making at the highest level over the course of much of the USSC's existence. Activities of the New York Office, established in 1862, are reflected in correspondence and other records documenting its coordination of the USSC's hospital transport work in 1862; its primary role in coordinating the shipment of supplies collected by Woman's Central Association of Relief and other branches to departments in the field; and its location as a base for the USSC's general secretary when in New York, especially after the USSC's administrative reorganization in the fall of 1863, as well as for financial staff working on Office and USSC treasury accounts. Also represented is the work of the USSC's Document Bureau, which distributed USSC publications, and the Lincoln Home, which provided shelter and other assistance for disabled and discharged soldiers. The USSC's Historical Bureau was created in 1865. Under the direction of General Secretary John S. Blatchford, it collected and organized the USSC's records, supervised the production of various Commission histories and reports, and gathered historical information and samples of USSC forms and publications. It was also the USSC's postwar office for administrative and remaining special relief work as reflected in correspondence, registers and reports. Archive Department records include registers of numbered documents created for various record groups, manuscript and printed records of USSC branches and aid societies; also, original writings and other materials submitted and compiled for proposed USSC historical publications, as arranged in the Special Relief Archives and Medical Committee Archives. In the 1878 many of the printed publications, graphics, photographs, and maps collected by the Archive Department, including some materials from the Medical Committee Archives, were removed to a newly created record group, called Condensed Historical Matter.

XVI. Pennsylvania Archives, 1861-1867 (43 boxes, 9 volumes)

The Pennsylvania Archives, 1861-1867, comprise the records of the Philadelphia Agency, founded 1861; those of its auxiliary, the Women's Pennsylvania Branch, founded in 1863; and the records of the USSC's Canvassing and Supply Department, created in 1864 to coordinate outreach to eastern USSC branches and direct the publication of the USSC's Sanitary Bulletin; also present are records documenting supply and other relief work conducted by USSC agents at Gettysburg and Harrisburg. Both the Philadelphia Agency and the Women's Pennsylvania branch worked closely to support the functioning of the USSC's supply depot in Philadelphia, an important resource for nearby eastern military operations. These activities are documented by correspondence and supply procurement and distribution records for each organization, as well as the Branch's minutes, reports and directories reflecting executive coordination of contributions from local aid societies. Special relief activities, such as the Agency's administration of its Soldiers' Home and Bureau of Employment, as well as the Branch's efforts to supply local families with employment and provisions, are also documented in their records. The work of the Canvassing and Supply Bureau is represented in correspondence, minutes, a journal, a list of Bulletin subscribers, and financial records. This group of records was brought together by the USSC during the post-war organization of its records to consolidate documentation of the Commission's Pennsylvania-based activities, especially in the city of Philadelphia. The records of the Philadelphia Hospital Directory and the Protective War Claim Agency of Philadelphia are now located elsewhere in the collection.

XVII. Statistical Bureau Archives, 1861-1867 (128 boxes)

The Statistical Bureau was established as a special department at Washington in the summer of 1861 to support the Commission's role as an independent advisory body to government with reference to the health, sanitary condition, and general comfort and efficiency of the U.S. volunteer army. Under the administration of E.B. Elliott and later Benjamin A. Gould, it compiled forms used by USSC inspectors and relief agents to investigate and monitor such conditions, or other topics determined by the USSC, and it collected data from those forms and tabulated their results for further analysis, reporting and publication by the USSC. It also collected data from Army regimental and medical records to support studies of loss and gain in the U.S. Army, which in turn supported the work of the work of the USSC's Hospital Directory, and used Army muster records, along with its own original forms, to conduct physiological and sociological studies of the American soldier. During the postwar period it moved its records and operations to Boston, near Gould's residence in Cambridge. These activities are reflected in the records in the Statistical Bureau Archives, 1861-1869, which contain original returns, tabulations, abstracts and other studies. These concern Camp Inspections; the physical and social condition of troops as seen in records of Height, Age and Nativity, as well as Physical Descriptions and Physical Examinations; reports of U.S. Army general hospitals; and Loss and Gain records, including transcriptions of regimental returns, diagrams plotting rates of sickness and mortality, and records of statistical loss and gain in battle, with notable studies of the condition of troops fighting at Bull Run and Gettysburg. The activities of Bureau staff during the administration of Benjamin A. Gould are documented in his incoming correspondence and weekly reports received from staff.

XVIII. Washington D.C. Archives, 1861-1866 (228 boxes, 23 volumes)

The Washington DC Archives consist of records of the following offices and departments that were based in Washington: the Central Office, the Special Relief Department, and the Supply Department, as well as the records of two departments which operated for limited periods of time: the Agency for the Purchase of Fresh Hospital Supplies, and the Department of Special Inspection of the General Hospitals of the Army.

Washington's Central Office at 244 F Street served as headquarters for the USSC's general secretary (successively, Olmsted, Jenkins, Blatchford), as well as associate and assistant secretaries who were responsible for operations in the USSC's Department of the East, with accounting and clerical staff (John S. Newberry, associate secretary for the Western Department, technically reported to the General Secretary). With its proximity to government and military departments, and closeness to military operations in Virginia, Maryland, and elsewhere, the USSC's Central Office in Washington was a major administrative and communications center for USSC operations in the east. Central Office records consist of numbered documents (letters and reports received) from USSC Standing Committee members, officers, relief agents in the field, and branch and agency personnel; military and medical staff; political figures, aid societies, and civilians; outgoing correspondence is present for general and assistant secretaries, other officers, and clerical and accounting staff. Topics include the collection and distribution of supplies, battlefield relief, USSC procedures, directing and receiving reports from personnel, particularly relief agents, and special relief and administrative matters. Also present are office journals; staff roster and employment records, scrapbooks, and a list of USSC lecturers.

Special Relief Department records shed light on the assistance provided to the large number of soldiers, sailors, and family members passing through the city; these consist of correspondence, office journals, registers and other materials documenting daily office activities, hospital back pay and bounty services provided; administration of homes and lodges in Washington and Alexandria; financial and transportation services provided, and questionnaires concerning the future plans of disabled discharged soldiers, compiled from interviews at USSC lodges.

Records of the Supply Department include various record books and tabulated summaries of supplies received, issued, shipped and maintained by the Receiving and Local Storehouses of this major USSC depot.

Records of the Agency for the Purchase of Fresh Hospital Supplies, located at Lodge No. 4, consist of correspondence and record books documenting the purchase of fresh vegetables and produce through its Philadelphia office for distribution to army hospitals in Washington, Gettysburg and other locations.

The Department of Special Inspection of the General Hospitals of the Army, initiated by the USSC's Medical Committee but located at the Central Office, operated from 1862-1863. Its records consist of letters, inspection reports, lists, memoranda, and other materials documenting the Department's efforts to recruit inspectors and perform inspections at various army hospitals. The records of the USSC's Statistical Bureau and Hospital Directory, also located at 244 F Street, are arranged separately.

XIX. Western Department Archives, 1861-1865 (33 boxes, 13 volumes)

The USSC's Western Department, formally organized in September 1861, assisted soldiers involved primarily in the operations of the Western Theater through a far-reaching network based in Louisville, Kentucky for most of the war. Geologist and paleontologist Dr. John S. Newberry (1822-1892), an Associate Secretary and Commissioner of the USSC, led the Department. Western Department Archives, 1861-1865, primarily document the Department's extensive supply distribution and relief efforts in the Western Theater, from its first base in Cleveland, Ohio (1861-1862) and later Louisville, Kentucky (1862-1865). Material is arranged by office or function and includes records for the Central Office, some agency offices, supply distribution, and Soldiers' Homes.

XX. Woman's Central Association of Relief, 1861-1866 (54 boxes, 4 volumes)

The Woman's Central Association of Relief (WCAR) was founded in April 1861 in New York City, officially becoming a branch of the USSC on June 24. Its primary function was the procurement of supplies, obtained from an extensive network of contributing aid societies. The WCAR also participated in other war relief efforts, such as fundraising, registering female nurses for work in military hospitals, and helping to direct returning, discharged soldiers and soldiers' families to local relief agencies for assistance. The Woman's Central Association of Relief held its final meeting on July 7, 1865, although it continued to receive supplies into October. Two prominent organizers within the WCAR were Louisa Lee Schuyler (1837-1926) and Ellen Collins (1828-1912). The Woman's Central Association of Relief Archives, 1861-1865, primarily document the supply procurement and distribution activities of the WCAR and consist of correspondence, minutes, reports, supply records, and directories listing associate managers.