

The Salvation Army (from the Library of Congress)

On **July 5, 1865**, [William Booth](#), an ordained Methodist minister, and his wife Catherine established the Christian Mission in London's poverty-stricken East End. Renamed the Salvation Army in 1878, the Booths were determined to assail the twin enemies of poverty and religious indifference with the efficiency of a military organization. Booth modeled his organization after the British army, labeling ministers "officers" and new members "recruits."



[Remember the poor: a Salvation Army Christmas box. 1903. Detroit Publishing Company. Prints & Photographs Division](#)

He espoused the religious doctrines subscribed to by mainstream Protestant evangelical denominations at the time. The Salvation Army was unique, however, in its commitment to establishing a presence in the most forsaken neighborhoods and in its provision for the absolute equality of women within the organization.

In 1880, the Salvation Army expanded to the United States. The movement also spread to Canada, Australia, France, Switzerland, India, South Africa, and Iceland. It now serves more than 100 countries.

As early as 1898, the Army had garnered enough attention for its unorthodox practices to become the subject of a popular satire, *Captain Shout, S.A.*, a farcical comedy included in [Rare Book Selections](#). The play tells the story of a Mrs. Gay, a "gay widow," and her romantic conquest of a Salvation Army captain intent on converting her:

Ah—that charming Captain Shout is coming to convert me to-day. Ha, ha...I'll just let them go ahead, as long as they send the Captain to me, for I do like him so much...I must have the piano open for him, for these Salvationists do love to sing and make a noise wherever they go.



"A man may be down but he's never out!" Home Service Fund Campaign-Salvation Army – May 19-26, 1919. Frederick Duncan, artist, 1919. Posters: World War I Posters. Prints & Photographs Division

North Carolina mill worker Enoch Ball discovered his life's work at a meeting of the Salvation Army. "When I was about 22 year [sic] old," he told writer Anne Winn Stevens in "[Shave Them](#)," an interview for the Federal Writer's Program of the Works Project Administration, "*the Salvation Army came to town and started a big meeting in the old Methodist church...Me and my wife both went to the meeting. We was converted the first night.*"

For Ball, the Salvation Army lived up to its name:

After I was converted I stopped drinkin'. The other boys in the gang made fun of me. They persecuted me at first and prophesied it wouldn't be long before I'd be back drinkin' with 'em. But I went right on livin' right. Before long they

began going to the meeting too. One by one they was converted.... Us boys that had been called the Wheathearts from the storeroom where we used to meet, was now called the Sweethearts – meaning good hearts.

[Shave Them]. Enoch Ball, interviewee; Anne Winn Stevens, interviewer; Asheville, N.C., August 1, 1939. [American Life Histories: Manuscripts from the Federal Writers' Project, 1936 to 1940](#). Manuscript Division

Within a few decades, the Salvation Army had become a respected charitable organization in the United States. During World War I, it was one of seven groups designated to raise money for the United War Work Campaign, an effort publicized in an "Address by John D. Rockefeller, Jr.," featured in [American Leaders Speak: Recordings from World War I](#). The Salvation Army operated 3,000 service units for the armed forces during World War II—and was one of the six civilian agencies folded into the United Service Organizations (USO) when it was established in 1941.



Don't forget the Salvation Army (My doughnut girl). Elmore Leffingwell and James Lucas, words; Robert Brown and William Frisch, music;

FEB 21 1919
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EX-SERVICE MEN'S \$20,000 DRIVE FOR

THE SALVATION ARMY

“GOOD-BYE SALLY”
GOOD LUCK TO YOU

Song
by
SERGEANT SAM HABELOW



15 cents a Copy

PUBLISHED BY
Chief Yeoman GEO. JEFFREY
Sergeant SAMUEL HABELOW

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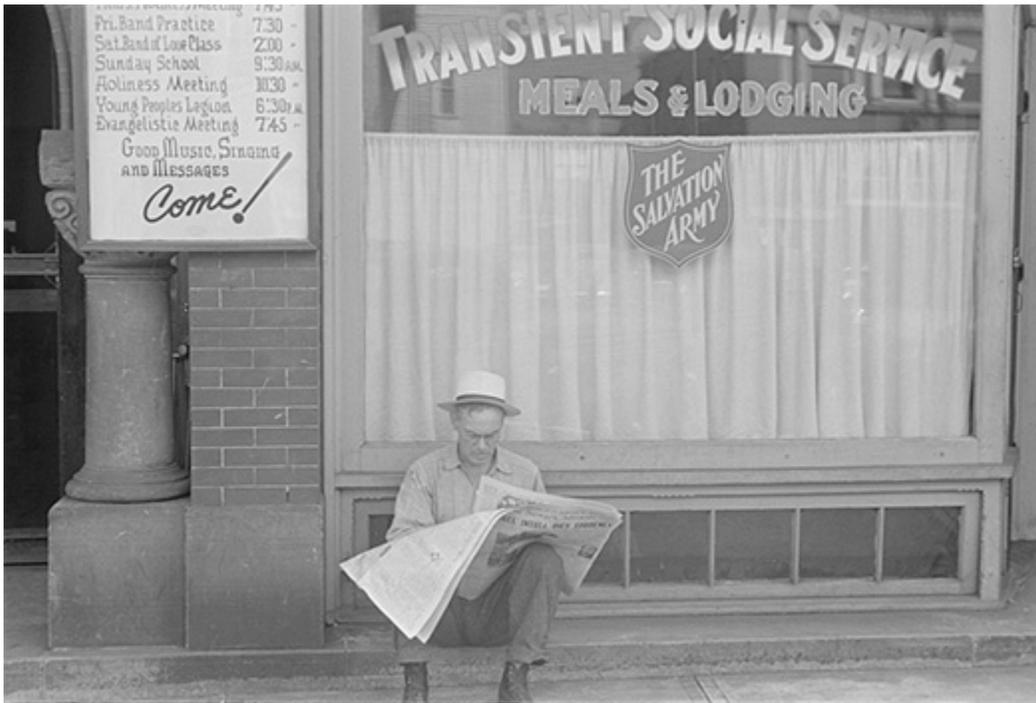
[Good-Bye Sally, Good Luck to](#)

[You](#). Sergeant Sam Habelow, words & music; arranged by Jos Solman; Boston, 1919. [World War I Sheet Music](#). Music Division

The Salvation Army was about the only sect I had much respect for. They used to do a lot of good, and they got dom little thanks for it. That's why they wear those droopy hats, you know. When they first come around, the people would pelt 'em with rotten eggs and vegetables and dom near anything they could lay their hands on. Durin' the war, after they helped oot the soldiers the way they did, they built up a fine reputation.

"MacCurrie." Francis Donovan, interviewer; Thomaston, Connecticut, February 15, 1939. [American Life Histories: Manuscripts from the Federal Writers' Project, 1936 to 1940](#). Manuscript Division

During the Great Depression, the Salvation Army provided food and lodging for those in need. The storefront pictured here, identified as the Newark, Ohio, Salvation Army headquarters, advertised the provision of "Transient Social Service, Meals and Lodging."



Salvation Army headquarters, Newark, Ohio. Ben Shahn, photographer; Summer 1938. [Farm Security Administration/Office of War Information Black-and-White Negatives](#). Prints & Photographs Division

A panhandler tells Depression-era stories about his colorful colleagues:

Sammy would take a job once in a while if he thought there was something extra in it, like playin' Santa Claus on the corner at Christmas. He liked to stand and figger how to get his hand in the little hole where the money goes down the chimney. I guess he never did figger that one out because the Salvation Army has been hirin' guys like Sammy for years and knows its oats.

"The Letter." J. D. Stradling, interviewer; Chicago, Illinois, 1938-1939. [American Life Histories: Manuscripts from the Federal Writers' Project, 1936 to 1940](#). Manuscript Division

Learn More

- [American Life Histories: Manuscripts from the Federal Writers' Project, 1936 to 1940](#) contains a wealth of information about American religious culture in the form of personal recollections of religious customs. Search the collection on *religion* or the denomination of your choice.
- [Farm Security Administration/Office of War Information Black-and-White Negatives](#) chronicles American life during the Great Depression; search the collection on *church service* or *church* to explore photographs of religious life in 1930s and 1940s. Similarly, search on *Salvation Army* to view black-and-white photographs of Salvation Army workers and those served.
- Search on *Salvation Army* in the [pictorial collections](#) to view photographs and posters depicting the Salvation Army at work.
- The religious milieu of early America is the subject of the online exhibition, [Religion and the Founding of the American Republic](#).