



It was estimated that 130,000,000 adults and 30,000,000 children needed things as basic as clothing. As a *La Crosse Tribune* editorial stated, "Out of the treasure of our abundance, even in war time, there is opportunity here to relieve suffering of the millions of people due to clothing needs alone."<sup>2</sup>

The goal of a national clothing drive from April 1-22, 1945 was to collect 150,000,000 pounds of clothing, shoes, and bedding to ship to people in liberated countries.<sup>3</sup> That translated into five pounds for every American.<sup>4</sup>

Henry J. Kaiser, the owner of the Kaiser shipyards, was the national chairman.<sup>5</sup> He established a network of 7,600 local chair people to organize the effort under the auspices of the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration.<sup>6</sup>

The general chairman in La Crosse County was A. H. Schubert.<sup>7</sup> The Rev. Homer Hoewing was the chairman of the clothing drive in West Salem and Bangor. Churches were designated as the primary collection depots.<sup>8</sup> In the city of La Crosse, items could also be dropped off at the AFL or CIO labor temples and any fire station.<sup>9</sup>


People in La Crosse County started cleaning out their closets. By the time representatives from churches, schools, labor, civic, and professional organizations met at the La Crosse Chamber of Commerce on April 11 to discuss packing and shipping, the response to the clothing drive was termed "overwhelming."<sup>10</sup> The drive in West Salem and Bangor, however, was "slow in gaining momentum." According to Rev. Hoewing, "many people do not seem to realize the importance of this extremely vital war and post-war task."<sup>11</sup>

Once collected, the donations were sorted into one of six categories: 1) infants, 2) children, 3) men's and boys', 4) women's and girls', 5) shoes ("paired and securely tied together"), 6) bedding. After sorting, the items were taken to the exhibition building at the fairgrounds in the city of La Crosse (the current location of Veterans Memorial Stadium on the UW-La Crosse campus). From April 22-29, people could still bring in donations to the fairgrounds. Packing started on April 22 with James Howard in charge. Appeals were made for volunteers to sort recent donations and pack the accumulated stockpile.<sup>12</sup>

THE LA CROSSE TRIBUNE, MONDAY EVENING, APRIL 23, 1945

# FINAL WEEK - - UNITED NATIONAL CLOTHING DRIVE

## APRIL 22 - 29




**WHAT CAN YOU SPARE THAT THEY CAN WEAR?**

Everyone should make a special effort to get their clothing delivered to their Church, labor hall or fire station **this week**.

No special calls can be made to pick up clothing. Everyone should deliver their clothing to one of the above places during the week.


### TYPES OF CLOTHING NEEDED:

- Type 1. Infants' (up to 3 years)
- Type 2. Children's (about 3 to 8 years)
- Type 3. Men's and Boys' (about 9 years and over)
- Type 4. Women's and Girls' (about 9 years and over)
- Type 5. Shoes (paired and securely tied together)
- Type 6. Bedding (usable remnants and miscellaneous)



**WHAT CAN YOU SPARE THAT THEY CAN WEAR?**

Right now, 125 million innocent men, women, and children in war-torn European countries alone, are in pitifully desperate need of clothing. If every American family will make this week "Clean-Out-Your-Clothes-Closet Week," enough spare clothing, shoes and bed-clothes will be obtained to go far toward relieving the suffering of these people. Will you help?




**WHAT CAN YOU SPARE THAT THEY CAN WEAR?**

The very lives of multitudes in war-torn countries depend on the filling of their desperate need for clothing.

The demands of America's armed forces and civilian needs are so great that only a small amount of new clothing can be spared for overseas relief.

But all of us can spare some serviceable used clothing—to provide the 150 million pounds that must be collected for that purpose.

In the clothes closets and attics of America's homes is enough usable, spare clothing to help care for the 125 million men, women and children—in Europe alone—who have given all but life itself toward the same lasting peace we all are fighting for. Let's get it out—and send it off—THIS WEEK!



**WHAT CAN YOU SPARE THAT THEY CAN WEAR?**

*This Page Is a Contribution to America's All Out War Effort by the Following Committee for Victory...*

A. M. & H. Plaster American Legion Post No. 10 American Legion Post No. 11 American Legion Post No. 12 American Legion Post No. 13 American Legion Post No. 14 American Legion Post No. 15 American Legion Post No. 16 American Legion Post No. 17 American Legion Post No. 18 American Legion Post No. 19 American Legion Post No. 20 American Legion Post No. 21 American Legion Post No. 22 American Legion Post No. 23 American Legion Post No. 24 American Legion Post No. 25 American Legion Post No. 26 American Legion Post No. 27 American Legion Post No. 28 American Legion Post No. 29 American Legion Post No. 30 American Legion Post No. 31 American Legion Post No. 32 American Legion Post No. 33 American Legion Post No. 34 American Legion Post No. 35 American Legion Post No. 36 American Legion Post No. 37 American Legion Post No. 38 American Legion Post No. 39 American Legion Post No. 40 American Legion Post No. 41 American Legion Post No. 42 American Legion Post No. 43 American Legion Post No. 44 American 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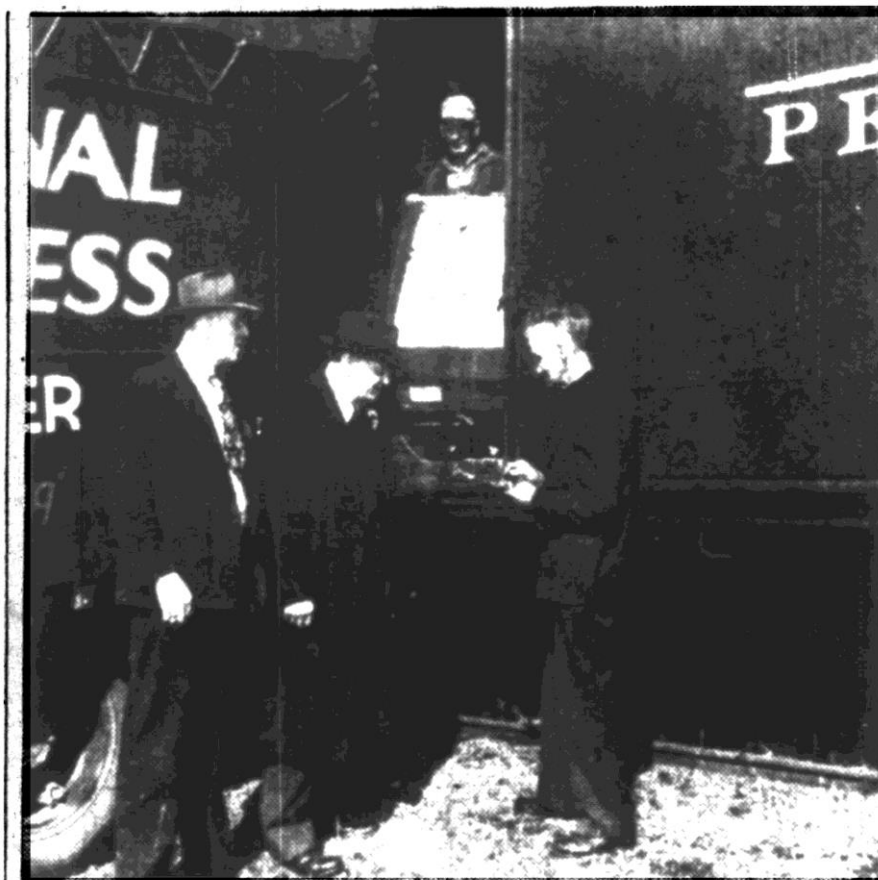
Even charitable activities retained the sexist divisions of the time. Mrs. A. M. Murphy directed the female volunteers who did the sorting during the day. Men packed the donations in the evening under the guidance of Harry Spence.<sup>13</sup> Among those doing the packing were members of the YMCA's Men's Club, B'nai B'rith and Sons of Abraham, Knights of Columbus, Lions Club, Kiwanis Club, and Rotary Club.<sup>14</sup> Members of the B'nai B'rith and Sons of Abraham packed 150 boxes, each weighing 100 pounds, in just one night of work.<sup>15</sup>

Donations soon filled the available packing containers, so repeated pleas went out for more cardboard cartons.<sup>16</sup>

By the end of the month, there were some early assessments of the success of the drive. Rev. Hoewing was then able to say that the response in West Salem had improved from "slow" to "wonderful," and this made him "very well pleased with the response."<sup>17</sup> The *La Crosse Tribune* castigated those who had

dropped off "ridiculous contributions," as well as those who "have gone to an extreme and practically cleared their hangers of clothing," calling both extremes "foolish giving." This editorial went on to suggest donating clothes left behind by men in the service because they would likely be out of style or not fit when the men returned.<sup>18</sup>

It was early May when the first railroad car of La Crosse County clothing donations was loaded and shipped. A. H. Schubert said at least two more railroad cars could be filled with clothing on hand.<sup>19</sup>



—Tribune Photo

**First Carload Of Clothing** from La Crosse county was loaded and shipped Thursday afternoon at the Inter-State Fair Grounds. It is expected three cars will be sent as the county's contribution to the National Clothing Collection drive. James Howard (left), chairman of packing and shipping, and A. H. Schubert, county general chairman, watch Harry Spence as he checks the first 100-pound cartons transferred from a truck to the railroad car.

*La Crosse Tribune, 1945 May 4, page 8*

Nationally, the first clothing drive of '45 provided 150,366,014 pounds of clothing, shoes, and bedding for people in war-ravaged countries. We call it the first clothing drive of '45, because, after the defeat of Japan in September 1945, Henry Kaiser directed a second clothing drive.<sup>20</sup>

Many people have always had more clothes than they really need. The clothing drive of '45 gave many the chance to help both other people and themselves.

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### Sources & Notes:

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- <sup>1</sup> "9 Bible Verses about Clothing The Needy," *Knowing Jesus*, accessed 2020 April 4, <https://bible.knowing-jesus.com/topics/Clothing-The-Needy>.
- <sup>2</sup> "The Clothing Appeal," *La Crosse Tribune*, La Crosse, Wisconsin, 1945 April 3, page 6.
- <sup>3</sup> "Clothing Drive Starts Apr. 1," *The Nonpareil Journal*, West Salem, Wisconsin, 1945 March 29, page 1.
- <sup>4</sup> "Local Clothing Drive Lags," *The Nonpareil Journal*, West Salem, Wisconsin, 1945 April 12, page 1.
- <sup>5</sup> "Clothing Drive Starts Apr. 1," *The Nonpareil Journal*, West Salem, Wisconsin, 1945 March 29, page 1.
- <sup>6</sup> "Henry J. Kaiser led national overseas war relief clothing drive," *Kaiser Permanente*, 2010 May 26, <https://about.kaiserpermanente.org/our-story/our-history/as-world-war-ii-ended-65-years-ago-henry-j-kaiser-led-collection>.
- <sup>7</sup> "Ship First Carload Of Clothing Thursday," *La Crosse Tribune*, La Crosse, Wisconsin, 1945 May 3, page 9.
- <sup>8</sup> *The Nonpareil Journal*, 1945 March 29.
- <sup>9</sup> "Seek Clothing In Drive Here," *La Crosse Tribune*, La Crosse, Wisconsin, 1945 April 3, page 1.
- <sup>10</sup> "Report Overwhelming Response To Clothing Drive in County," *La Crosse Tribune*, La Crosse, Wisconsin, 1945 April 11, page 2.
- <sup>11</sup> *The Nonpareil Journal*, 1945 April 12.
- <sup>12</sup> "Stress Clothing Collections During Last Week In April," *La Crosse Tribune*, La Crosse, Wisconsin 1945 April 21, page 6.
- <sup>13</sup> "Seek Volunteers To Assist In Sorting, Packing Clothing," *La Crosse Tribune*, La Crosse, Wisconsin, 1945 April 24, page 8.
- <sup>14</sup> "Groups Help Pack Clothing," *La Crosse Tribune*, La Crosse, Wisconsin, 1945 April 29, page 4.
- <sup>15</sup> "Pack 150 Boxes Of Clothing In Evening," *La Crosse Tribune*, La Crosse, Wisconsin, 1945 May 2, page 12.
- <sup>16</sup> *La Crosse Tribune*, 1945 April 24. Also: "Seek More Cartons," *La Crosse Tribune*, La Crosse, Wisconsin, 1945 April 28, page 1.
- <sup>17</sup> "Clothing Drive Huge Success," *The Nonpareil Journal*, West Salem, Wisconsin, 1945 April 26, page 1.
- <sup>18</sup> "Clothing Gifts," *La Crosse Tribune*, La Crosse, Wisconsin, 1945 April 28, page 4. Unfortunately, the article did not give any specifics about the ridiculous donations, so we can only use our imaginations.
- <sup>19</sup> "Ship First Carload Of Clothing Thursday," *La Crosse Tribune*, La Crosse, Wisconsin, 1945 May 3, page 9.
- <sup>20</sup> *Kaiser Permanente*, 2010 May 26.