

Several local businesses also encouraged members of the community to give.



DOERFLINGER'S

La Crosse Tribune, 1945 March 4, page 14

La Crosse County was expected to raise \$60,000 toward the nationwide goal of \$200,000,000. The aim was to have "every family give from \$5.00 to \$10.00, every hired man \$5.00, and other single adults at least \$2.00 or \$3.00 or more."¹

La Crosse Mayor J. J. Verchota issued a proclamation citing all the good done by the Red Cross, and he proclaimed March 1945 as American Red Cross month.²

The campaign began with a meeting of the county chairmen and co-chairmen. Speakers were Ray Bice (whose son was serving in the Navy in the Pacific Theater) and Mrs. Rexford Mitchell. Bice said, "The people on the home front should give all they have and make the greatest sacrifice." He said the funds were needed to help those who have suffered in the war, while Mrs. Mitchell talked about the Red Cross blood collections, surgical dressings, sweaters, and kit bags for servicemen.³

Another service provided by the Red Cross was emergency communication and travel for servicemen and their families. In January 1945, the local Red Cross handled 537 "home service cases."⁴

The American Red Cross had been established by Clara Barton in 1881. A volunteer nurse during the Civil War, Barton traveled to Europe after the war where she learned of the Red Cross in Switzerland. Barton returned intent on establishing the organization in the United States. She served as first president of the American Red Cross for 23 years.⁵



Clara Barton; photograph by Matthew Brady
(American Red Cross)

World War II was undoubtedly the most challenging mission for the American Red Cross in its history. It provided invaluable support to servicemen and their families at home and abroad.

The Red Cross even operated mobile clubs called clubmobiles staffed by women known as "Donut Dollies."⁷

ERNIE PYLE says:
"This is your Red Cross"


"Something Fine to Behold" *By Ernie Pyle*

EVERYWHERE I went there was the American Red Cross giving its services to our fighting men. It is something fine to behold, this touch of home which the men and women Red Cross workers are able to bring to our troops abroad. When the Red Cross opens up in a new war theater, its growth has to be as fast as the growth of the Army. The way clubs spring up overnight in newly occupied centers, the way restaurants and dances and movies and clubmobiles and doughnut factories mushroom into life all over a new country, is something that still astonishes me. Right in the field with their regiments are the Red Cross field directors, who act as a link between the soldiers and their homes.

In most of the hospitals, doing the recreational and welfare work for which the nurses can spare so little time, are the Red Cross hospital girls. With every medical unit are countless quantities of the indispensable blood plasma made from the voluntary blood donations of the American people.

Our soldiers and sailors abroad literally worship the Red Cross, and I personally can find nothing but praise to say about its program as I saw it in operation.

THE ERICKSON BAKERS
 producers of
HOLSUM BREAD AT ITS BEST!

GIVE NOW - GIVE MORE  **KEEP YOUR RED CROSS AT HIS SIDE**

La Crosse Tribune, 1945 March 3, page 3

Seventy-five years after the end of World War II, the American Red Cross continues to provide valuable services to our communities. To learn more, see: <https://www.redcross.org/local/wisconsin/about-us/locations/southwest-chapter.html>.

Jeff Rand
 Adult Services Librarian
 La Crosse Public Library

Sources & Notes:

- ¹ "Red Cross Drive Will Open Here Monday," *Non-Pareil Journal*, West Salem, Wisconsin, 1945 March 1, page 1.
- ² "A Proclamation to the Citizens of the City of La Crosse," *La Crosse Tribune*, La Crosse, Wisconsin, 1945 March 1, page 4.
- ³ "County Red Cross Drive Chairmen Receive Instructions for War Fund Campaign," *Non-Pareil Journal*, West Salem, Wisconsin, 1945 March 1, page 1.
- ⁴ "Red Cross Home Service Aids Families of Many Servicemen," *La Crosse Tribune*, La Crosse, Wisconsin, 1945 March 4, page 5.

⁵ "Founder Clara Barton," *American Red Cross*, accessed 2020 March 2, <https://www.redcross.org/about-us/who-we-are/history/clara-barton.html>.

⁶ "World War II and the American Red Cross," *American Red Cross*, accessed 2020 March 2, <https://www.redcross.org/content/dam/redcross/National/history-wwii.pdf>.

⁷ Dr. Carolyn Apple, "World War II: 'Donut Dollies' & the American Red Cross," *Delaware Historical & Cultural Affairs*, accessed 2020 March 2, <https://history.delaware.gov/ww-ii-donut-dollies-the-american-red-cross/>.