

125 YEARS!

EVERYTHING'S CHANGED SINCE 1886. EVERYTHING EXCEPT THE TWIN CITIES SALVATION ARMY



The Salvation Army first began offering disaster relief following a devastating hurricane in Galveston, Texas on Sept. 8, 1900. The advent of automobiles later produced Salvation Army mobile kitchens, used to provide food and drink to survivors and relief workers. Pictured is a mobile kitchen and Twin Cities firefighters in the 1950s.

The world was a different place when The Salvation Army arrived in the Twin Cities in 1886. Today, for example, there are about 600 million cars on the planet. That year, Karl Benz patented the first one. Today, millions will search Craigslist for pets, furniture and a zillion other things. That year, the London Times published the world's first classified ad.

Today, the Twin Cities Salvation Army provides food, shelter and spiritual outreach to thousands. In 1886, the Twin Cities Salvation Army...um, provided food, shelter and spiritual outreach to thousands.

"Good things never die," said Major Darryl Leedom, Twin Cities Salvation Army Commander. "Most things from 125 years ago are gone, dilapidated or forgotten. But not The Salvation Army. Giving in Christ's name never becomes obsolete and never goes out of style."

The Twin Cities Salvation Army is proud to celebrate 125 years of service. But alas, to sum up our history and all we've accomplished since 1886 would probably require 1886 pages. So here's our best crack at it in five pages, with entertaining stories and facts acquired via interviews and an intensive archive search.

SHUSH

Many Twin Citians covered their ears when The Salvation Army came to town in 1886. Back then, in addition to providing food and shelter, The Salvation Army's primary function was to spread the gospel through loud open-air meetings on busy street corners. But some people didn't want to hear it. Many Salvation Army officers had to dodge rotten vegetables hurled by onlookers who didn't appreciate hearing the message of Jesus Christ.

Even the government was irked. In 1887, Salvation Army Lt. William Read held an open-air meeting in St. Paul and was arrested for disorderly conduct. Thankfully, an 11-person jury of Irish immigrants — all literally had last names beginning with "Mc" — found him not-guilty.

Others were more receptive. That includes Ednia Sidney Williams, a Minneapolis resident who heard The Salvation Army's first open-air meeting on Aug. 6, 1886. The meeting was held on the corner of Hennepin Avenue and North First Street by an



officer named Captain Evans. She wrote about her experience in the Aug. 8, 1886 edition of the Minneapolis Tribune:

“God grant (that) the good captain and his zealous followers may stir our city with their songs and words,” she wrote. “Certainly we are not winning such complete victories alone; we need reinforcements for our army of salvation. Let us stand by this modest captain as part of our loyalty to the Great Captain.”

Years passed, and the Twin Cities Salvation Army became deeply entrenched in the community. Several worship and service centers were opened in the worst parts of town, the vision of Salvation Army founder William Booth. (Today there are eight such centers, five of which are found in the most impoverished neighborhoods of the Twin Cities.)

Booth started The Salvation Army in London, England in 1865 on the premise that those who need help the most – drunkards, prostitutes, gamblers and the like – won’t listen to the message of salvation until their basic needs are met. He surmised that if you offer them a bowl of soup in exchange for listening to a sermon, they’ll be more receptive to hearing the Good News.

SYMBOLIC VICTORY

Ten years after arriving, the Twin Cities Salvation Army had firmly established itself as Christian group that boldly served in the scariest parts of town. Nothing underscored this fact more than what happened on Oct. 2, 1896: The Salvation Army purchased a brothel and turned it into a house of God.

The place was called Theater Comique. It once was a respectable playhouse. But after years of neglect, the theater – dubbed a “Den of Evil” by the Minneapolis Tribune – was sold and had devolved into a house of ill repute. The theater “offered its exclusively male clientele the choice of several back doors ... and the opportunity to observe female dancers who did not always adhere to Victorian standards of decency,” according to the book “Lost Twin Cities” by Larry Millett.

For The Salvation Army to transform Theater Comique into a worship center was a symbolic victory. It was a “case of good crowding out evil,” the Minneapolis Tribune reported on Oct. 3, 1896. “Theater Comique, which for several years has been the resort of the lower

When they said  Salvation Army kettles, they really meant kettles. Though the kettles of today are smaller than those of yesteryear, their impact remains just as big. The first-ever kettle was introduced in 1891 in San Francisco, Calif. by Captain Joseph McFee, who wanted to provide a Christmas dinner to hungry locals but didn't have the funds. The former sailor then remembered seeing a philanthropist in Liverpool, England use an iron pot to collect donations for the poor. Salvation Army kettles were born! Pictured is an undated photo – presumably the 1950s – of volunteers bell ringing near Donaldson's department store in downtown Minneapolis.



classes of society in the city, was last evening dedicated to the work of saving souls. ... The army has now demonstrated its right to live by accomplishing a feat which the police officers of the municipality have for years failed to do.”

The Twin Cities Salvation Army would continue to flourish in the coming decades. And it would become even more important during a time period with economic conditions similar to today.

GREAT DEPRESSION

Oct. 29, 1929 marked Black Friday, the epic stock market crash that spawned more than a decade of economic misery in the U.S. and worldwide.

It also marked the beginning of the Twin Cities Salvation Army’s finest hour. In a time of starving families and 25 percent unemployment, The Salvation Army used 10 years of mass anguish to demonstrate Christ’s love and provide in abundance.

On Christmas Eve, 1932, for example, a fleet of Salvation Army trucks took to the streets of Minneapolis and delivered gift baskets to 1,500 families in peril. “Make no mistake about it, each of

(continues on page 12)



↑ *This is the first-ever Twin Cities Salvation Army operation center. It opened in Minneapolis in 1886 at 1523 Crystal Lake Ave. It moved 23 times in 30 years, until 1916, when it moved to Marquette Ave. in Minneapolis and stayed there until 1944.*

those baskets contained the best of potatoes, onions, canned corn ... poultry, canned peaches, candy, popcorn balls and toys," states the Jan. 28, 1933 edition of War Cry, a national Salvation Army magazine still in print. "To as many homes as possible, and where especially needed, went warm clothing for the children and more toys. The sight presented by those baskets packed and ready to go was enough to make the heart beat still faster."

Tom Koenen's heart still beats fast just thinking about it. If not for a bag of groceries delivered to his grandfather by The Salvation Army during the Great Depression, his father, Andrew Koenen, would have been an orphan.

Andrew Koenen was just a boy in the 1930s. He lived in St. Paul with his parents and two brothers, not far from The Salvation Army. His family had been going hungry so often, his parents made the gut-wrenching choice to give him and his brothers away to a local Catholic charity.

"There was no other way," Tom Koenen said. "The morning that my dad and uncles were to be given away as orphans, my grandparents readied the boys to make the long walk to (the orphanage). My dad took his winter coat off the hook and the family walked out the door to start the sad journey."

Just then, two men came up the sidewalk with boxes of groceries from the local Salvation Army. It was a gesture that gave the family so much hope, they marched right back into their home and resolved to stay together.

"The family made it after that," Tom Koenen said. "I think The Salvation Army's promise of 'Doing The Most Good' was involved in those boxes of groceries my family received that one day long ago."

STILL STANDING

A year before the Great Depression began, the Twin Cities Salvation Army opened the Harbor Light Shelter in Minneapolis. After 83 years, the place is still going strong. Its name has changed a few times and it's moved a time or two, but its mission remains unmodified: Serve the poorest of the poor.

Harbor Light is Minnesota's largest homeless outreach center, providing nightly shelter and three meals a day to hundreds of people. It opened in 1928 at 216 Marquette Ave. in Minneapolis, strategically located near a nauseating gathering place for transient and homeless men along Washington Ave. — Skid Row.

Skid Row existed for decades. It was littered with broken wine bottles, empty cigarette packs, \$3-a-week hotels and stinky pigeon droppings. According to Salvation Army historical documents: "The area contains not only the roughs, toughs and larrikins, the

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↑ *The Salvation Army opened this operation center in St. Paul in 1887, a year after coming to Minneapolis. Salvation Army officers marched out of the facility to hold open-air evangelism meetings that were met with much hostility. According to Salvation Army records: "Often the meetings would be interrupted by a group of toughs who had been drinking and who, in addition to talking loudly, would break up some of the benches, which would have to be repaired by the officers before the next meeting."*



indigent and enfeebled old men, the gutter drunks, sneaks and beggars — but also a large, less visible group of common laborers ... unemployed at the time of their residence on the 'Row,' sometimes through choice, sometimes involuntarily.”

At Harbor Light, men living within Skid Row discovered God and they found purpose. In addition to spiritual outreach, they performed work therapy — cooking, cleaning and other tasks — in exchange for food, showers and lodging.

A similar, smaller Salvation Army center opened near Skid Row in 1913. It was called the Men’s Social Service Center and was located at 51 Merriam Street — now home to the luxurious Nicollet Island Inn.

“How can a man — dirty and ragged and weak from years on Skid Row — suddenly become respectable?” asked Harbor Light official Captain Tom Crocker, in a July 31, 1962 story in the Minneapolis Herald. Crocker was a lifelong alcoholic who spent eight years in the gutter before finding God at a Salvation Army center in Detroit, Mich.

“Most need more than a sermon and good intentions,” he continued. “Now we take them in, give them baths, a place to sleep and work to do. We give each man a lot of attention, so that he feels that somebody really cares about what happens to him.”

THE REST IS HISTORY

More years passed. Wars were fought. Elvis changed music. Jim Crow laws were abolished. Presidents were shot. TV and computers arrived. Communist Russia crumbled.

Through all that’s happened, the Twin Cities Salvation Army has emerged as the largest faith-based social service agency in town. We assist more than 214,000 people a year through 27 local centers of operation, including churches, social service offices, housing facilities and more. We serve an average of 2,100 hot meals a day and house about 900 people every night. More than 33,000 local volunteers help The Salvation Army provide these and other services, from child daycare to senior housing.

“To be sure, it’s been a long and eventful 125 years,” Leedom said. “Empires rose and fell, fortunes were made and squandered, good people lived and died. Yet The Salvation Army remains. Through the timeless and life-giving message of Jesus Christ, we will never die.”

1955 VS. TODAY



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ere’s a fun comparison between the Twin Cities Salvation Army of 1955 and that of today, with information taken from our 1955 annual report.

Annual budget

1955: \$975,000
2010: \$24 million

Meals served

1955: 320,519
2010: 760,990

Toys given at Christmas

1955: 16,381
2010: 62,151

In 1955, in-resident maternity care was given to 275 unmarried mothers and their babies at a Salvation Army hospital in St. Paul, a facility now used to house homeless youth.

In 1955, the Twin Cities Salvation Army was part of a Missing Persons and Inquiry Bureau. Every Salvation Army service unit “on the free side of the Iron Curtain,” the annual report states, “is a potential link in the chain that The Salvation Army seeks to forge between friends and dear ones who have become lost to each other.” A third of all inquiries resulted in “found” status.

