

Black Oak Soldiers' Relief Association ~

In the South Carolina Room of the Confederate Museum in Richmond, Virginia, is an old book, "The Minutes of the Proceedings of the Black Oak Soldiers' Relief Association of St. John's Berkeley Parish, in Charleston District, South Carolina." (At this time, St. John's Berkeley Parish was in Charleston District, rather than what we now call Berkeley County.)

This old book was sent to the Museum by Miss Edith Waring, daughter of the (then) president of the association, Mrs. Morton Anne Waring. The date of the association's organization was, first at Pinopolis, in August 9, 1861, and then again at Black Oak on August 14, 1861.

Officers were: Mrs. Morton Waring, President; Mrs. Isabella S. Porcher, Vice-President; Mrs. Thomas F. Porcher, Secretary and Treasurer; Directresses, Mrs. C.L. Porcher, Mrs. T.P. Ravenel, Mrs. W.H. Markley, Mrs. J.C. Cain, and Mrs. H.L. Stevens. Miss Louisa A. Porcher was appointed Treasurer on August 23, 1861 (at the resignation of Mrs. Thomas F. Porcher.

An interesting book, indeed, it is, amazingly recorded, i.e., on pages seven and eight, listing fifty-nine members of the association. Listing many reports of the association's work, read some of the examples given:

- September 5, 1861 – Eighty dollars spent for purchase of material.
- September 24, 1861 – Three hundred overcoats made up for Hampton's Legion.
- October 2, 1861 – One hundred and eighteen pairs of drawers and three hundred shirts were cut out and made.
- October 2, 1861 – Sixty-seven shirts, thirty-five coats, and twenty uniforms made up for the Ladies' Christian Association.
- December 3, 1861 – One hundred and thirty-eight articles made.
- December 11, 1861 - \$100.00 sent to Coosawhatchie Hospital.
- January 1, 1862 – Two hundred pieces of clothing made.
- January 19, 1862 – Two hundred and fifty pieces of clothing made.
- February 12, 1862 – One hundred and twenty-one articles made.
- September 23, 1862 - \$133.50 sent to Virginia for the sick and wounded. And to the soldiers in the West, \$245.00. Twelve boxes, containing wine, brandy, whiskey, and food were sent to hospitals.

- June 21, 1864 – (the last entry) was of a box sent to the sick and wounded in Virginia on June 21, 1864 . . . but this must not be supposed that the work stopped and/or ended here.

In 1899, Miss S.C. Waring writes: “Soldiers’ Relief Associations were formed all over the Confederacy, and a great deal of needlework accomplished by mistress and maid throughout the country. At Black Oak and Pinopolis was organized the society called the *Ladies Auxiliary of Black Oak*.

“This society first bought material and made a quantity of clothing for soldiers, then offered to help other societies in Charleston, and on some occasions, made as many as one thousand pieces in three weeks.

“The ladies knit and kept supplied many companies in socks and gloves, caps, shirts, and comforters. For four years we worked unceasingly, and even at evening parties the knitting needle was a regular attendant.

“Work for our soldiers was nothing but pleasure, and while the cars were being dealt, our knitting proceeded rapidly – tongues and fingers moved alike. The writer of this paper in one week knitted six pairs of socks.

“As time passed on, and every man and boy was taken to keep up the ranks of our army, the ‘times’ seemed hard indeed. Women were obliged to look after the welfare of home matters, and then many a woman showed herself a heroine.

“One day, a wounded Confederate came to our house, asking for shelter and concealment. ‘but,’ said he to my mother, ‘Madam, it may cost you your house.’ ‘Sir,’ said she, ‘go to your room; a Confederate woman can suffer for her country.’ The soldier rested quietly, and the next morning he was taken off by his comrades. We heard nothing of his pursuers.

“Later in the war came a call from the government for cooked food for the prisoners who had been brought to Florence. They were dying of typhoid fever.

“Then came a rush! Five thousand starving men, dying of disease, though they were the enemy, appealed strongly to the hearts of our women. Large boxes were filled with well-cooked food and sent to Florence, three hours being the time required for transportation. Seven large boxes of food made quite a formidable appearance, being carted from the house of the president of the society.

“ When the final stroke came, we found ourselves an overpowered people . . . and working to the last.”

Continuing . . . according to a letter or notes from Miss Waring and Mrs. R.V. Hennegan in 1901:

“The work of the association was continued until the close of the war, but, owing to the unsettled state of the country, they were unable to hold the usual meetings, and no minutes were kept. Supplies of socks, clothes of every kind, and also cooked provisions were kept in hand, ready to supply any passing soldiers, or to send off, in case of need.” This is testimony of the daughters of the president.

Another member (Miss Marianne Porcher) writes: “It would be impossible, at the end of thirty-six years, to give the number of boxes and articles of clothing and cash contributed during the whole war, for besides what was sent by the association proper, quantities were contributed by individuals. After the war, we were requested to send our book to Richmond, where it is entered on the Catalogue as No. 313.”

Edited by Keith Gourdin

Resource:

-*South Carolina Women in the Confederacy, Records Collected by Committee from South Carolina State Division, U.D.C.* Edited and Published by Mrs. Thomas Taylor, Chairman, Mrs. Smythe, Mrs. August Kohn, Miss Poppenheim, Miss Martha B. Washington.

-*The Charleston Mercury*, Charleston, SC.