



AMERICA WE THANK YOU

An Armenian Tribute to Near East Relief

VIRGINIA FACT SHEET

Virginia was a staunch supporter of Near East Relief (NER), the American-led campaign that quickly sparked an international response with its unprecedented humanitarian endeavor, mobilizing all segments of American citizenry including elected officials, celebrities and laypersons alike, to help rescue victims of the Armenian Genocide in Ottoman Turkey from 1915-1930.



- Virginia facilitated its relief efforts through its state office headquarters, suite 321 in the American National Bank Building in Richmond.

- In May 1922, NER's official publication, the *New Near East*, which boasted a monthly readership of over 100,000 persons a month, reported that Near East

Relief's mission and operations had been "unequivocally endorsed by the General Assembly of the State of Virginia in resolutions recently offered by Senator Morgan R. Mills of Richmond. The resolutions passed both houses by a unanimous vote."

- In 1923, Virginia's State Superintendent of Public Instruction designated the week of April 16-20 as Near East Relief Week to ensure that the children of the state would assist in the campaign of food and clothing drives.
- An outstanding feature of Near East Relief work in Virginia was its devoted volunteer corps comprised of over 2,000 aid volunteers throughout the state, who were integral to the successes of the relief efforts.
- Teachers and students throughout 15,000 classrooms in Virginia participated in raising funds for the orphan children overseas by enthusiastically facilitating the sale of orphan meal tickets, to ensure that NER could continue to provide nutritional sustenance to the Armenian orphans, who would otherwise starve to death.



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- In December 1920 alone, the generous citizens of Virginia donated an impressive sum of \$22,317.81 in response to NER's Christmas Giving Appeal.
- Local Boy Scouts assisted the gracious residents of Virginia who on designated "Bundle Days" would donate gently worn clothing, mainly warm coats and shoes, along with warm blankets to be sent overseas in time to provide warmth against the harsh winter months.
- On November 30th 1924, Virginia Governor E. Lee Trinkle issued a proclamation for the observance of NER's Golden Rule Sunday Dinner set for December 7, 1924. Virginia too participated in this international endeavor where participants enjoyed a modest Sunday dinner and donated what they might have otherwise spent on a heartier meal to the humanitarian efforts of NER. Governor Trinkle urged Virginians to observe Golden Rule Sunday and participate in "a day of fasting and meditation on which the food eaten will represent such as that supposed those little wards known to the world as Near East Orphans."
- And perhaps the most impactful episode of Virginia's philanthropy to the orphans overseas was its establishment of the Virginia Training School at Syra in Greece. Virginians were urged and graciously participated in the mass appeal to donate an annual gift of \$66.67, which would feed, clothe, educate and sustain a child for one full year. Pledge cards were circulated statewide and NER workers overseas would provide donors with photographs and stories about the children saved by their sponsorship. Often letters of gratitude were penned by the orphans themselves and mailed to their sponsors.

Virginia, We Thank You!

Thanks to the generosity of the Near East Relief, its participating organizations and entities, the U.S. Government and State Governments, and especially the American people at large, over 1,000,000 refugees and 132,000 orphans of the Armenian Nation and other Christian minorities were rescued, fed, clothed, and educated. We have survived, thrived, and prospered from the horrors of Genocide at the hands of Ottoman Turkey.

For your unwavering support and unprecedented generosity in donating to Near East Relief's humanitarian efforts, Virginia, We Thank You!



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