



AMERICA WE THANK YOU

An Armenian Tribute to Near East Relief

WEST VIRGINIA FACT SHEET

West 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.



Highland, Rt. Rev. P.J. Donahue and Leroy Allebach.

- West Virginia facilitated its NER activities through its state headquarters located at the Red Cross Building in Charleston.

- West Virginia's State Executive Committee was comprised of Dr. Ernest Thompson (Chairman), J.C. Mossiron (Secretary), Fred Staunton, Ernest Howell, Isaac Loewenstein, W.B. Mathews, O.F. Payne, J.D. Steele, M.P. Shawkey, Bishop W.L. Gravatt, Herbert Frankenberger, George S. Laidley, Hon. Virgil

- West Virginia had a quota of \$212,000, of which \$200,000 had already been reached before the fund raising deadline. The state's NER organization was in full force for the purposes of stimulating public interest in the care of 400 orphan children, who West Virginians believed had be fed, clothed and educated with West Virginia money.
- In a 1921 report from Dr. Smith following his visit to the NER offices in New York City, he stated that "the real work of the West Virginia division of the national committee lies in the care of the orphans... That but \$60 is sufficient to pay for the care and education of a child for one year... it is understood that the drive to secure families or individuals to adopt Armenian and Syrian children through the payment of this amount for their protection and upbringing will be prosecuted relentlessly."
- The \$212,000 fund raising goal for this state was to serve as a working fund, through which medium the orphans and destitute adults who look to the state for preservation would be taken care of. This fund, however, said Dr. Smith, "must be supplemented continually by donations from all over the state if the work is to be carried on." The report emphasized how business owners, are to be asked to take an active interest in the care of Armenia's orphans, educators will be asked to cooperate, the assistance of women's organizations, business



An ANCA WR Initiative



**AMERICA
WE THANK YOU**
An Armenian Tribute to Near East Relief

WEST VIRGINIA
**FACT
SHEET**

men's clubs and fraternal orders will be solicited and, in fact, every conceivable plan to strengthen the interest of West Virginians in this work will be followed out.”

- On August 13, 1919, Publicity Director for the West Virginia NER committee, David Dove Beardsley wrote to the editor of *The Piedmont Herald* newspaper, F.W. Rose (also a local philanthropist) requesting that brief news stories relative to West Virginia's NER-related relief work, find a place in the next publication of the newspaper. The letter stated that while the quota for West Virginia was \$212,000, he was confident that West Virginia will “yet earn a white star,” which meant he believed the state would go “100 per cent over their working goal.” He emphasized that the cooperation of the press and other public institutions with the state's various committees and assurances from private citizens will render every service to NER that is expected of the state. The letter continues, “The work of primary importance in rehabilitation and reconstructing Armenia is the care of 400,000 orphan children. Of this number, 400 look to our state for food, clothing, and education. If but 400 persons can be prevailed upon the pledge \$60 each to carry on this work, West Virginia's part in preserving a people will be virtually at an end for the ensuing year. It is within the power of the press to bring this thing to pass and no worthier achievement can ever be recorded in its factor.” Mr. Beardsley stated that the work of the NER is “one of the greatest charitable movements in all history.”
- One week later, on August 22, 1919, Mr. Beardsley wrote another letter to the editor of *The Piedmont Herald* newspaper, thanking him for allocating space in his paper for the West Virginia NER Division's relief work. However, this time, Mr. Beardsley stated “Every effort is now being made to put the state organization on an efficient basis, especially since the recent action in the United States Senate, incorporating the American Committee. Only last week, President Wilson signed the bill making us a chartered National Committee. Appreciation of the gigantic task before us has led us to the determination that all waste must be eliminated. Again, we seek your assistance. How much space are you willing to volunteer for the use of the Armenian-Syrian Relief each week?”
- On June 17, 1920, Executive State Secretary of NER, Dr. William Smith wrote a letter to Miss May Rose, Secretary of the Piedmont Civic Club regarding a campaign to collect warm worn clothing, stating “the indescribable anguish and suffering in Armenia during last winter because of the want of clothing will never be known.” The letter stated that in response to the limited appeal for worn clothing last year, a generous supply was sent, but the articles were not warm enough or appropriate for the harshest of cold conditions. The letter of appeal continued, “The great American heart needs only the fact set plainly and they are not only ready, but willing to send such clothing as they can readily spare.” The letter states that warm clothing collected by West Virginians could be packed in the most convenient of ways, in boxes, barrels, or burlap and shipped at the least expense to the Near East Relief New York offices packing room.



An ANCA WR Initiative



**AMERICA
WE THANK YOU**
An Armenian Tribute to Near East Relief

WEST VIRGINIA
**FACT
SHEET**

- West Virginia’s NER office utilized the power of marketing and advertising, creating a graphic, which depicted a happy and well-dressed little girl named Ruth, (as shown on the first page of this fact sheet) which represented Virginia and West Virginia’s child that would help the countless ill-clothed and needy children in Armenia who were miserable and hungry. Inside the pamphlet was a description of Konia, which was a center for prosperous Armenian trade and industry, but later became the scenes of thrift and the “dread order of deportation.” Orphans grew from hundreds to thousands, it stated. This marketing tool appealed to the residents of the state, emphasizing the need to help the Armenian orphans. In fact, the material went on to tell the story of a “little beggar”, Marcarid Hagopian, whose parents were both killed during the first year of the war, and who spent the next three years with her sister wandering the streets dressed in rags, begging for scraps of food. “Yet, even such an existence, they knew, was preferable to the experiences of most Armenian orphans.” The hand out described, with graphic photos and text, the various steps needed to be taken to raise these orphans back to life.

West Virginia, We Thank You!

Thanks to the generosity of the Near East Relief, its participating organizations and entities, 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, West Virginia, We Thank You!



An ANCA WR Initiative

www.AmericaWeThankYou.org | 104 N. Belmont | Suite 200 | Glendale | CA 91206 | 818.500.1918 | info@AmericaWeThankYou.org