

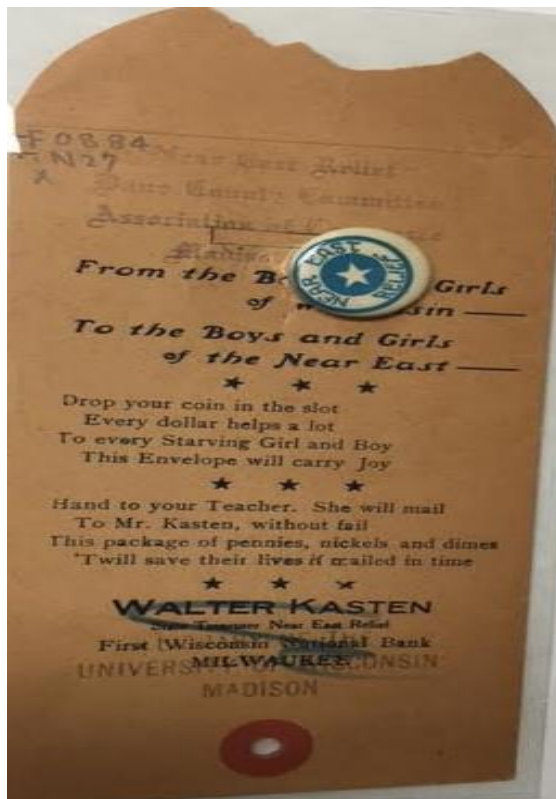


AMERICA WE THANK YOU

An Armenian Tribute to Near East Relief

WISCONSIN FACT SHEET

Wisconsin 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.



- Wisconsin facilitated its NER efforts from its state office headquarters located at 930 Caswell Block in Milwaukee.

- Wisconsin native, Lester Wright was born in 1886 in Waukesha. Wright served as an agricultural missionary in NER's Harpoot's unit where he planned to introduce agricultural innovation to the refugees who although had survived the Armenian Genocide, were left without any sustainable resources.

- However, in 1922 fearing for the safety of Armenians and other Christian minorities because of Turkish nationalist forces who continued the ethnic cleansing of its remaining minorities, NER facilitated what has been termed "The Great Orphan Migration" ensuring the safety of over 80,000 orphans.

- Wright was instrumental in assisting over 900 Armenian and Greek refugee children to safety from Turkey to Aleppo, Syria, as he personally accompanied them on these harrowing journeys through the rigorous terrain. It was described that "Wright then took the remaining 130 weak delicate children and brought them out with the tenderness of a mother, and got them all safely through to Aleppo."

- After the children had been escorted to safety, Wright returned to Harpoot to oversee NER's operations and while traveling by car on the eve of October 27, 1922 with missionary friends, Wright was tragically murdered when their car was stopped and robbed by a group of bandits. His body was returned to the U.S. and several memorial services were held in honor of Wright including one in Brooklyn by NER officials.



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- In 1921, Wisconsin convened a state conference in Milwaukee with 300 delegates representing every county in the state. The conference was attended by heads of Masonic Order, Eastern Star, Odd Fellows, Knights Columbus, American Legion, Federation of Women's Clubs, State Sunday School Association, Milwaukee Ministerial Association, State Superintendent of Education, prominent leaders, and every other organized agency in the state.
- The State of Wisconsin was deeply committed to leading the work for the suffering Armenian children and adopted resolutions and forwarded them directly to Congress requesting immediate and effective relief.
- As evidenced by the photograph (front page), "The Boys and Girls of Wisconsin" were urged to donate "To the Boys and Girls of the Near East" by way of gifting their coins in such envelopes..."To every Starving Girl and Boy This Envelope will carry Joy."
- A week's campaign in Milwaukee included national speakers addressing residents in clubs, schools, churches and synagogues. As a result, donations of much needed clothing were made, including 5,000 pairs of overalls and 2,000 pounds of knitted goods.
- The Shoe Dealers' Retail Association wrote letters to its membership to clear their shelves of slow-moving and shop-worn stock for the benefit of the destitute of the Near East.
- Wisconsin participated in the Near East Relief's Christmas Appeal in 1921 and raised an incredible sum of \$19,374 in donations from generous supporters.
- Children in Marinette, Wisconsin placed their pennies and their dimes and their quarters in small cradles placed in each school.

Wisconsin, 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, Wisconsin, We Thank You!



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