



DOING THE
MOST GOOD®

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The Origin of The Salvation Army Red Kettle

The Salvation Army's Captain Joseph McFee in San Francisco resolved in December 1891 to provide a free Christmas dinner to the poor. But how would he pay for the food? The question stayed on his mind until he recalled his days as a sailor in England when he would see passersby throw charitable donations into a large pot where boats came in at the Stage Landing.

The next morning, he secured permission from the authorities to place a similar pot at the Oakland Ferry Landing, at the foot of Market Street. No time was lost in securing and placing the pot where all those going to and from the ferryboats would see it. And thereby, Captain McFee launched the red kettle fundraising tradition.

By Christmas 1895, kettles were used in 30 Salvation Army locations in various West Coast areas. That year, the *Sacramento Bee* described the Army's Christmas activities and mentioned the contributions to street-corner kettles. Shortly afterward, two young Salvation Army officers who had been instrumental in the original use of the kettle, William A. McIntyre and N.J. Lewis, were transferred to the East. They took with them the idea of the kettle. In 1897, McIntyre prepared his Christmas plans for Boston around the kettle, but his fellow officers refused to cooperate for fear of "making spectacles of themselves." So, McIntyre, his wife, and his sister set up three kettles at the Washington Street thoroughfare in the heart of the city. The kettle effort in Boston and other locations nationwide resulted in 150,000 Christmas dinners for the needy that year.

In 1898, the *New York World* hailed The Salvation Army's kettles as the "newest and most novel device for collecting money." The newspaper also observed, "There is a man in charge to see that contributions are not stolen." In 1901, kettle contributions in New York City provided funds for the first mammoth sit-down dinner in Madison Square Garden, a custom that continued for many years. Today, donations to Salvation Army kettles at Christmas help support the nearly 23 million Americans served annually by the Army through shelters, after-school programs, addiction-recovery programs, summer camps, disaster assistance, and many other social services.

Kettles can now be found around the world in Korea, Japan, Chile, Australia and many countries in Europe. This year, The Salvation Army will continue asking people to join the #FightForGood and encouraging people to share the causes they are fighting for this season. People can visit give.salvationarmyusa.org to donate directly to a need The Salvation Army addresses, such as hunger, shelter, and holiday assistance. It's a chance for people to think about and share how their donations make a difference.

Public contributions to the kettles enable The Salvation Army to bring the spirit of Christmas to those who would otherwise be forgotten all year long – to the ill, the incarcerated, the aged and lonely, the poor and unfortunate, and even other institutions. In the United States, kettles at Thanksgiving and Christmas help make it possible for The Salvation Army to do the most good for more than 23 million Americans each year.

To learn more, visit salvationarmyusa.org.

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