



BRIEF HISTORY OF VHA

25th Anniversary of VA as a Cabinet Department

VAVS NATIONAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE-CONFERENCE
VHA HISTORIAN

April 24, 2014



VA
HEALTH
CARE | Defining
EXCELLENCE
in the 21st Century

Veterans Benefits Before the Civil War



1775 – 1855 - bounty-land warrants

1776 – 2nd Continental Congress
authorized first disability pensions

1794 – officers' widows & orphans
benefits

1834 – U.S. Naval Asylum
(Philadelphia) for Regulars with 20+
years of service

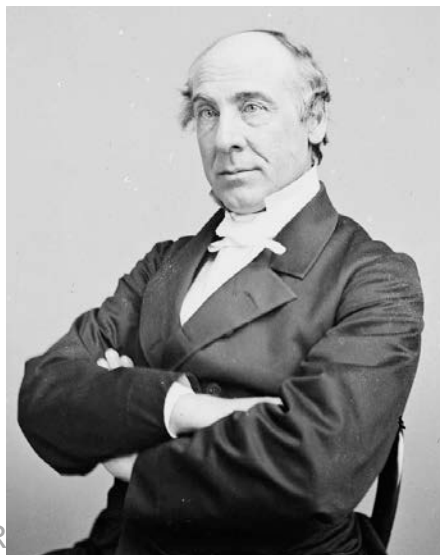
1851 – U.S. Soldiers Home (D.C.) for
Regulars with 20+ years of service

1855 – Government Insane Asylum
“St. Elizabeth’s” (D.C.)

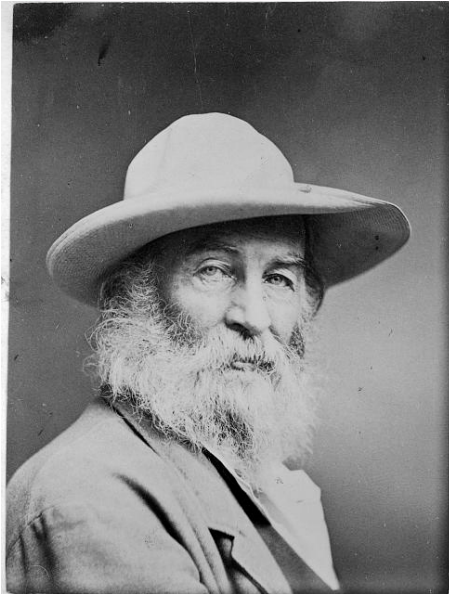
VHA Owes Its Origins to Civil War Volunteers

- In June 1861, one month before the First Battle of Manassas, Congress authorized the U.S. Sanitary Commission, a volunteer organization, to assist the Army medical department with providing care and supplies for regiments of U.S. VOLUNTEER soldiers.

Dr. Henry Bellows was placed in charge of the U.S. Sanitary Commission



U.S. Sanitary Commission - Notable Volunteers



Walt Whitman



Frederick Law
Olmsted

Executive Secretary
(1861-63)



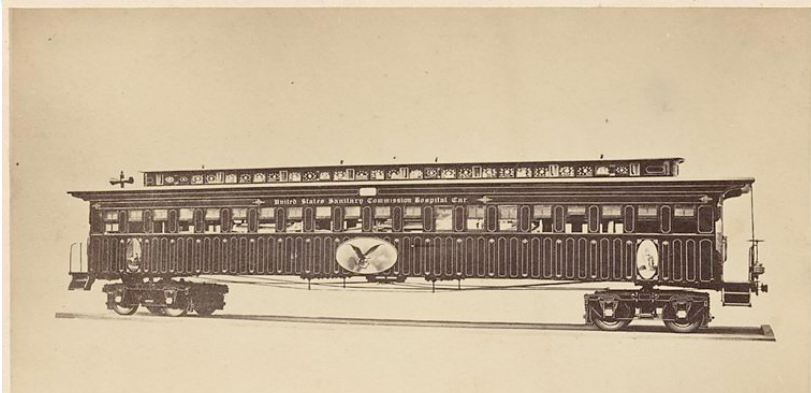
Clara Barton



Frederick N.
Knapp

Superintendent of Special
Relief

U.S. Sanitary Commission



U.S. Sanitary Commission Revealed a Need



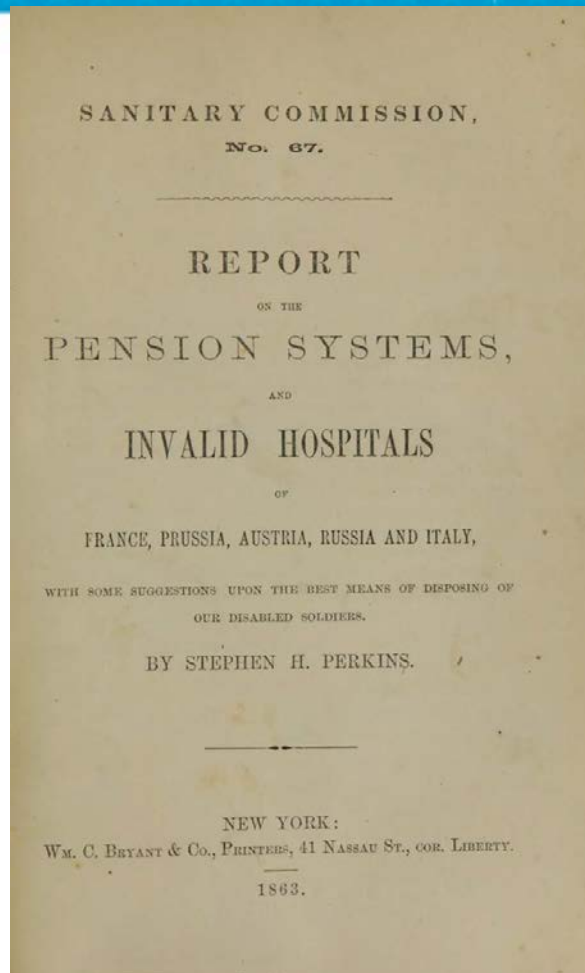
Pvt. Charles Mitchell, 107th
NY Infantry, 1863

VETERANS HEALTH ADMINISTRATION



U.S. Sanitary Commission "soldiers home" on New York Ave.,
D.C., 1864 c.

1862-63 U.S. Sanitary Commission study



Perkins report recommendations:

- Every permanently disabled officer & soldier entitled to a pension; widows & orphans get half pensions
- Two classes – those fit for garrison service or unfit for service
- All pensioners have right to appointments in U.S. civil service (based on Prussia's "Versorgungs-Scheins")
- Establish hospitals and industrial villages with boarding houses for unmarried men or small cottages for invalids; run under military rules with occupation of various kinds.



Civil War – First Benefits for Volunteer Soldiers & Sailors

- 1862 - African Americans could legally enlist in Federal Regular or volunteer forces and were entitled to benefits for the first time in history
- 1862 – first national cemeteries authorized
- 1862 – Volunteers placed on equal footing as Regular forces for federal benefits
- 1862 – first prosthetics authorized
- 1865 – preference in hiring began
- 1865 – first federal hospital-home for volunteers in the world (NHDVS)
- 1865 – certain transportation costs
- 1866 – caretakers (pension supplement)
- 1892 – first pensions for Civil War nurses
- 1897 – Civil War nurses eligible for burial in national cemeteries
- 1900 – first government-provided Confederate headstones (Arlington); National Homes open to U.S. Veterans of ALL wars
- 1906 – first government headstones for Confederates buried in former Union prison camps
- 1916 – special pensions for MOH recipients
- 1923 – first women Veterans admitted to NHDVS
- 1929 – government headstones for Confederates buried anywhere
- 1958 – first pensions authorized for Confederates (2 alive at the time)

1865 – National Soldiers & Sailors Asylum – VHA's Origins

March 3, 1865 – day before Lincoln's 2nd inauguration

1866 amendment – established the Post Fund – built churches, theatres, libraries, recreational buildings, memorials, zoos, landscaping, provided boats, games, books, pool tables, etc.

GAR chapters present on all campuses





The first National Asylum/Home opened November 1, 1866 in Togus, Maine



WORLD WAR I – A New Paradigm & 1ST Transformation of Veterans' Medical Care

1914

Bureau of
War Risk
Insurance
(Treasury)

1917

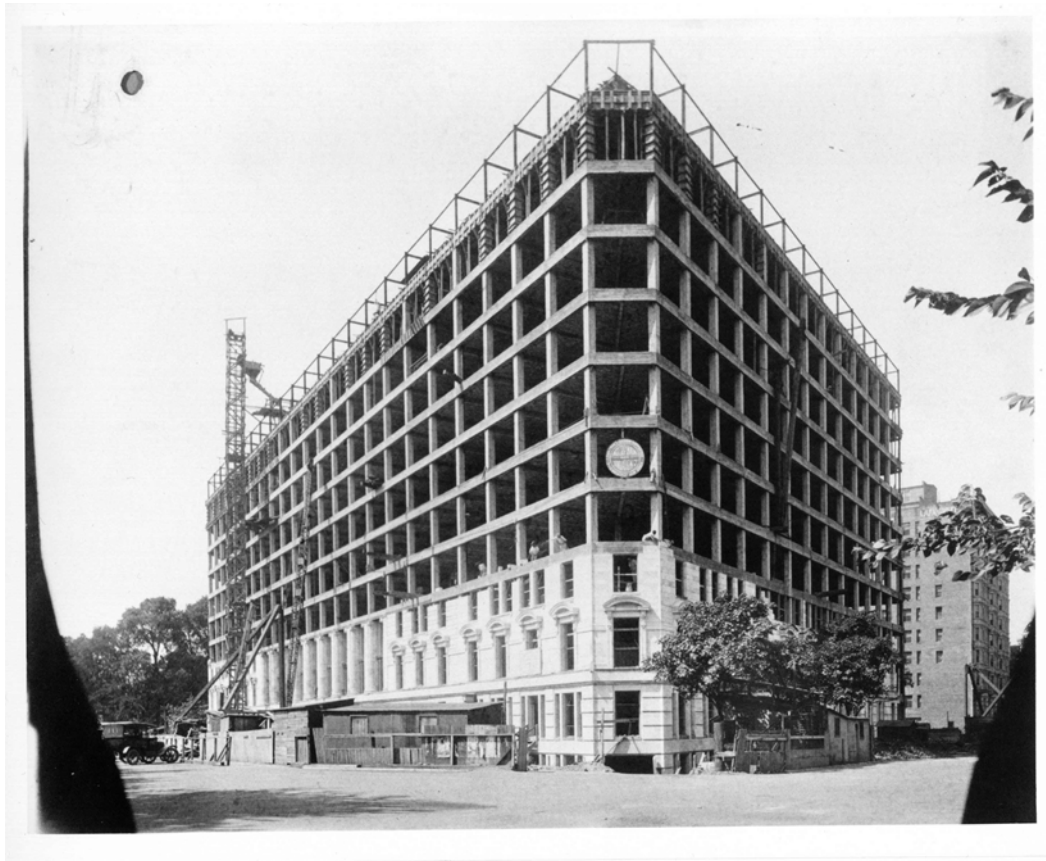
Federal Board
of Vocational
Education

1918

Public Health
Service
(Treasury)

JUST FOR WORLD WAR I VETERANS

1918 – Bureau of War Risk Insurance



Occupation of the
Bureau of War Risk
Insurance (BWRI)
Building on Vermont
Avenue (now VA
Central Office)
began in the fall of 1918

1921 – FIRST CONSOLIDATION & TRANSFORMATION

1914
Bureau of
War Risk
Insurance
(Treasury)

1917
Federal Board
of Vocational
Education

1918
Public Health
Service
(Treasury)



1776
Pensions
(Interior)

1862
National Cemeteries,
prosthetics (Army)

1865
National Home
for Disabled
Volunteer
Soldiers
(NHDVS)

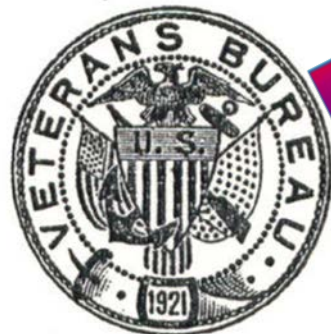
1921
ABMC

1930 – 2nd CONSOLIDATION

1776
Pensions
(Interior)

1862
Prosthetics
(War Dept.)

1865
NHDVS



Veterans Administration went into full effect on July 1, 1931

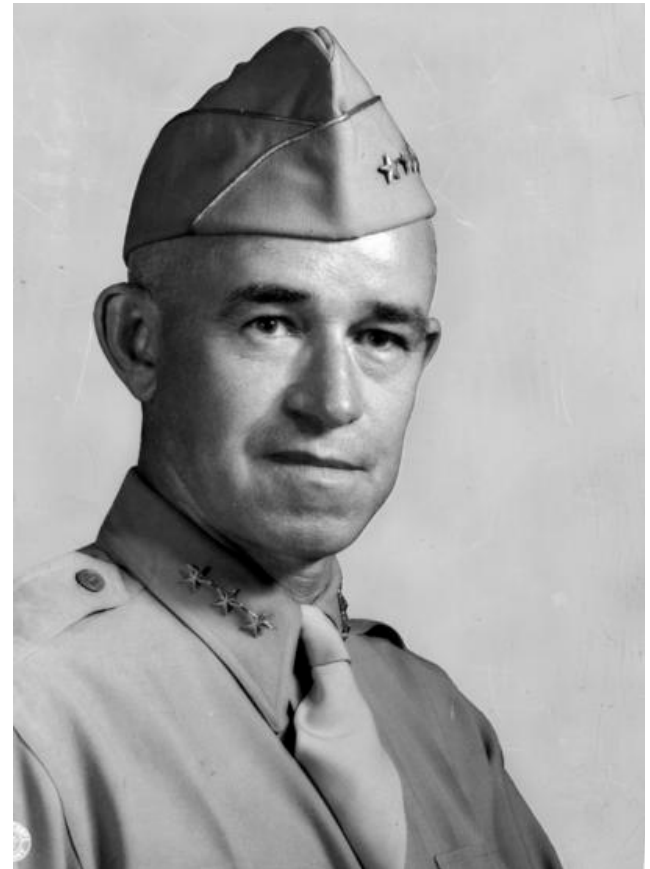
1923 – 1945 General Frank T. Hines Steered VB-VA Through Rough Times

- Integrity after Forbes scandal
- Tuskegee & segregation
- First Women Veterans
- First Native American Veterans
- Great Depression
- Bonus Army marches/certificates
- Largest Federal hospital construction program in history
- Conversion of NHDVS into VA hospitals
- Reliance on Red Cross & other volunteer organizations
- VSOs authorized to aid presentation of Veterans' claims
- Pearl Harbor - WWII began
- G.I. Bill's 1st year



1946 – General Bradley's Transformation of VA

- Department of Medicine & Surgery
- Rehabilitation
- Medical research, cooperative studies
- Medical school affiliation program
- Special Services: mission - help the hospitalized Veterans get well: library, recreation, voluntary service (VAVS), canteen service, chaplaincy service, fiscal & administrative service
- Post fund amplified so that certain gifts (land, etc.,) could be sold and proceeds converted into cash
- Modern, high-rise, 1,000+ bed hospitals



1950 – Old versus New

Hines-era hospital “2nd Generation”



Salem (Roanoke), VA, opened April 22, 1935

Bradley-era hospital “3rd Generation”



Brooklyn (Ft. Hamilton), NY
opened February 9, 1950

VA Voluntary Service

“the human side of demobilization”

1950: 38 national VSOs - welfare organizations, over 300 local organizations; 113 hospitals; 72,700 volunteers; 344,700 avg. volunteer hours per month

1970: 112,000 volunteers donated 9,791,000 hours per month



James H. Parke, 1st VAVS Director, 1946 - 1970

JWB HOSPITAL WORK IS COMMENDED BY VA

Volunteer organizations must continue to serve hospitalized veterans, Brig. Gen. Francis R. Kerr, assistant administrator for special services of the Veterans Administration, declared yesterday at the National Jewish Welfare Board,

TEEN-AGERS BRING CHEER TO HOSPITAL

Group of 100 Boys and Girls
Brighten Lives of V. A.
Patients in Jersey

Special to The New York Times.

EAST ORANGE, N. J., Aug. 4—A group of teen-agers is providing something new in treatment for patients at the Veterans Administration hospital here. Hospital staffers call

600 VOLUNTEERS ASKED

Veteran's Hospital Appeals
for Variety of Workers

Six hundred men and women volunteers 21 years old or more are urgently needed by the Veterans Administration Hospital, 408 First Avenue. An appeal for help was made last week by Miss

VETERANS HEAL

1973 – 3rd consolidation



1862
**National
Cemeteries**
(all but 2
transferred)



1988 – Elevation to Cabinet-level Department



1990s VHA's Modern Transformation Began

- Evidence-based medicine
- Proactive
- VISNs established
- Decentralization
- Digital/computer age – VistA, EHR, HealthEVet, bar coding medications
- Outpatient clinics
- Minority Veterans programs
- Women Veterans programs
- Spinal Cord Injury Centers
- Rural Health Initiative
- Mobile Vet Centers
- Award-winning staff and research



Today's VHA Wouldn't Exist Had It Not Been For Volunteers

1861 U.S. SANITARY COMMISSION



1900 Clara Barton founded American Red Cross



1917 BWRI, PHS, VB, VA & the Red Cross



1946 VA Voluntary Service (VAVS)



1865 National Home for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers (NHDVS)



1930 VA Homes

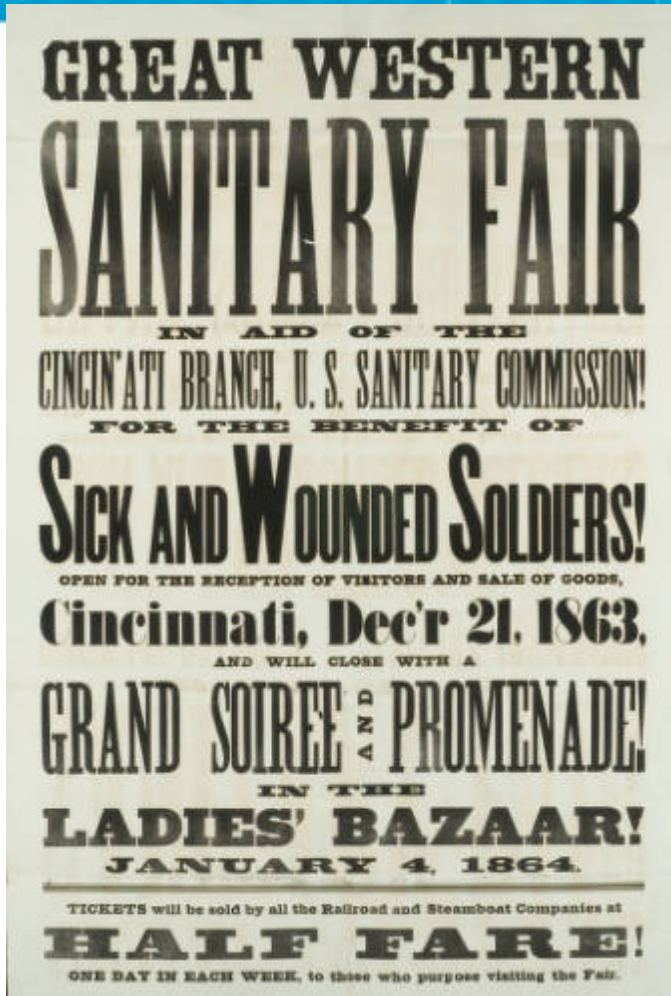


1945 VA Hospitals-Domiciliaries



2014 ALL 11 original National Homes still operating

THE END



QUESTIONS?

CONTACT: DARLENE RICHARDSON, HISTORIAN

(202) 461-7374

OR

Darlene.Richardson@va.gov