



Sanitary Commission: Our Heroines, from "Harper's Weekly"

Date

published April 9, 1864

Primary Maker

Thomas Nast

Medium

Wood engraving on newsprint

Description

American Civil War. "This piece celebrates the nurturing role of women through its portrayal of the Sanitary Commission. Founded in New York City in 1861, this private organization sought to provide aid and comfort to Union soldiers during the Civil War. The organization supplied nurses, ambulances, and hospitals and even inspected the sanitary conditions of army camps for President Lincoln (1809-1865). By coordinating female war relief efforts the Sanitary Commission allowed many northern women to apply their traditional labors to the Union cause. In his illustration, Nast commemorates the physical care and emotional support that women administered during the conflict. Through trying times, the female form offers the same sense of stability to the viewer. The use of a common woman reminds onlookers of respectable women in their lives. Although the Sanitary Commission broadened the possibilities for female economic and political participation Nast chose to evoke the women's maternal, caretaking qualities by highlighting their subservient role." (SOURCE: Mary Bei Prince, "Thomas Nast's Conception of Nineteenth Century Women", 2019)

Dimensions

Composition: 9 × 13 5/8 in. (22.9 × 34.6 cm) Sheet: 15 11/16 × 10 3/8 in. (39.8 × 26.4 cm)