PAPERS FROM THE HISTORY SEMINAR OF
KALAMAZOO COLLEGE

NO. 19. A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE KALAMAZOO CORPS OF THE SALVATION ARMY SINCE 1926

by

Raymond J. Tomaszewski

January, 1949
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The Christian Mission Magazine (London, England) of August, 1878, stated that the Christian Mission "has organized to carry the Blood of Christ and the Fire of the Holy Ghost to every corner of the world."¹ William Booth, founder and "general" of this Salvation Army, modelled its "Orders and Regulations" on those of the British army. The operations of the Army were extended in 1880 to the United States.² Six years later, when, in 1886, the Founder paid his first visit to the United States, he found 238 Corps in the Union, under the leadership of 569 officers, mostly American.³

The certificate of incorporation issued by the State of New York in 1889 established the legal existence of the Salvation Army in the United States. The Salvation Army likewise became incorporated in the State of Michigan and operates under the laws of Michigan. According to the act of incorporation in this State, the following are the purposes of the organization:

For charitable and religious purposes of benefiting the poor and needy; by relieving their bodies of disease and suffering; by assisting them

to establish themselves in life; by bringing their minds and hearts under the influence of education and the Christian religion; and by otherwise promoting their mental, moral, and physical welfare.

The Kalamazoo Corps of the Salvation Army celebrated its golden jubilee in the spring of 1938. The Army opened fire in Kalamazoo in the spring of 1887. The first barracks or quarters were located in the old Academy of Music, at the site where the Jackson Floral Shop is now located on South Rose Street. The first officers in charge of the work here were Ensign and Mrs. John Waldron.2

From this location the Army moved later to the second floor of the old Bell Shoe Store, East Michigan Avenue, where it remained until 1889. Then the headquarters were moved to Portage Street, near the present site of the Watson Hotel. Headquarters were maintained there until 1892 when they moved to North Rose Street, at the present site of the Ritchie-Davidson Barber Shop; the Army remained there until 1909.3

It was during the command of Adjutant and Mrs. James Conlin that a campaign was conducted for funds to purchase the old City Creamery Building at Church and Water Streets. This building is now occupied by a tavern.

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3 The Kalamazoo Gazette, March 21, 1937.
In 1926 this property was sold and land purchased at 244 North Rose Street, the present location of the Army's headquarters.  

In the early days incidents were frequent in which the Salvation Army workers were submitted to indignity and even arrest. An example of this occurred sixty years ago in Kalamazoo. What happened was explained by the local newspaper.

The Salvation Army made another attack on the devil last night and attempted to run sinners in by the bass drum route. The city law says that sinners shall not be run in by this method and accordingly a warrant was signed for the arrest of the left-handed sheepskin thumper, John Smith.

The boy drummer was released without bail, but the drum was locked up in jail. When Smith stood trial on February 15, the jury disagreed and the prisoner was dismissed. The lad was defended by Attorney Hampden Kelsey and prosecuted by Elbert S. Hoos.

A week later the Salvationists were pounding their drums with renewed vigor and all the law could do was to stand aside and let them pound. It seems the police had returned the drum.

Half a century ago the corps was going strong. It was holding big meetings, but also catching a few brickbats, too. Once in a while a fight would be going on in the back of the hall while a prayer meeting was in

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1 The Kalamazoo Gazette, March 21, 1937.
2 Ibid., February 14, 1888
3 Ibid., February 21, 1888
progress in the front....but the prayer meeting usually won out.¹

These early meetings were held by the light of gas lamps and around a coal stove during the winter months. Open air meetings were extremely numerous and the members were often jailed for holding religious services on the street corners. They were arrested on such charges as disturbing the peace or blockading the highways or sidewalks. It was not uncommon for people to throw whiskey bottles. Open air meetings were held every Wednesday, Saturday, and Sunday evening. Closed meetings were held every night. These worship services were open to the general public, and were "closed" merely in the sense that they were held indoors.²

The program of the corps enlarged to the extent that in 1924 a larger building was needed, as suggested above. The building of the time was inadequate in that it provided only auditorium space, with no provision for activities such as the gymnasium, club rooms, recreation rooms, and band room.

After years of planning, the new three story brick building was completed in 1926. The cornerstone for this new project was laid by Col. Alexander Raymon,
second in command in the Central District. It was started in September, 1925, and cost $45,000.¹

The building was dedicated June 18, 1926. The new building was acclaimed one of the finest of its kind in the country. The building, still in use today, has two large auditoriums, one on the main floor which seats 400 and one on the third floor with a seating capacity of 600. Offices are found on the second floor, and in the basement are shower baths, elaborately equipped. There is also a six room apartment for the resident custodian.

Many new projects were introduced and others became expanded. The third floor auditorium came to be used for entertainments, Sunday school classes, and activities of the Young People's Division. At the rear of the third floor there was started a library, a women's work room, and a dining room. The large gymnasium at the rear of the main floor became fully equipped. Community meetings, services, and some sort of activity began to transpire every night in the new building.

The advisory board for this enlarged program was organized from prominent citizens of Kalamazoo and members of the Salvation Army. D. W. Waldo was president of the advisory board and Earl H. Shepherd was treasurer.

¹ The Kalamazoo Gazette, June 20, 1926.
The other members were: Fred Sutherland, A. B. Connable, John R. Moore, George Irvine, Charles A. Fisher, Mark Bailey, Guy P. Wilson, and Howard J. Cooper. \(^1\)

The function of the board is to follow the work closely, and, through regular meetings with the officers of the Salvation Army, the members assist and advise in the development of program and plans. \(^2\)

Ensign John M. Paton, who came here from the Grand Rapids post a few months before the building was completed, was in command of the Kalamazoo branch. \(^3\)

The purely spiritual activities of the corps are similar in many respects to those of any church, though differing in certain respects. The usual church services, Sunday school activities, and prayer meetings are held regularly. The street meetings of the Salvation Army are a distinctive feature of the organization. Through this means it tries to reach a group of unchurched masses. \(^4\)

The work of the Corps Cadets pertains largely to Bible study, though subjects of a character-building nature are discussed frequently. This work is designed for young people between the ages of thirteen and eighteen.

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1. The Kalamazoo Gazette, June 20, 1926.
2. Ibid., loc. cit.
It is largely confined to the children of Salvationists, for the reason that young people taking the course of study have in mind the objective of determining their fitness to become candidates for the Training College for Salvation Army officers, located in Chicago.  

The Kalamazoo Corps has maintained a band since 1907. Virtually every Salvation Army officer is able to play an instrument or direct a band. Since the erection of the new building there has always been a senior band, a junior band, and a singing group.  

The first band was under the direction of Peter Gayhide. In 1933, the Kalamazoo Corps taught 115 boys to play musical instruments. This fact comes to the front as its most outstanding single program of character building for that year.  

The Salvation Army has maintained for many years, an organization known as the Life Saving Scouts. Their work is nearly parallel to that of the Boys Scouts of America. There is a similar organization for the girls known as Guards. It is similar to the Campfire Girls or Girl Scouts. The junior organization of the Girl Guards is called the Sunbeams.

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1 Grace, op. cit., p. 29.
2 From an interview with Mr. William H. Councell, member since 1897.
3 See Corps Statistics on pages 20, 21, and 22.
4 The Kalamazoo Gazette, January 1, 1934.
The Young People's Legion (or the Y. P. L.) is designed to meet many needs in the lives of young people between the ages of thirteen and eighteen. Training is usually of a character-building nature, and stresses public speaking, music, Christian ethics, and citizenship.

In the average neighborhood served by the Salvation Army there is a great need for adult education, particularly concerning child care and homemaking. The Cradle Roll is designed to fulfill partially this need. The organization is unique in that it is designed for both mothers and small children, and during the course of the regular meetings, both groups receive instructions. The program for the children is similar in nature to that of nursery schools. The mothers hear discussions, lectures, and see demonstrations pertaining to the care and education of infants and small children.

Other normal functions of the Kalamazoo Corps include the Home League, the Men's League, Bureau of Missing Persons, and a gymnasium program.¹

The familiar ring of the Salvation Army's Christmas bells has been heard in Kalamazoo for 63 years. The drive has been carried out without interruption, a drive to provide funds for Christmas dinners, clothing and toys for Kalamazoo's needy families.²

¹ Material secured from the files of the Kalamazoo Corps.
² The Kalamazoo Gazette, November 21, 1945.
The official organ of the organization is The War Cry, a weekly magazine of news and inspirational material covering all aspects of the organization. John Chevallier\(^1\) raised $14,000 for the local corps in nine years of selling War Crys at Christmas time. Jacob Robyns\(^2\) won first prize for selling War Crys in the years 1930, 1931, and 1932.\(^3\)

Certain aspects of the work of the Salvation Army are not represented in Kalamazoo. For example, the Women's Social, commonly called the Home and Hospital, a division that cares for unmarried mothers, is not found here. In 1936 the local corps sent five unwed mothers to the Army Rescue Home and Hospital in Grand Rapids.\(^4\)

Likewise, the Men's Social, a self-supporting branch dealing with male derelicts, is not represented in Kalamazoo. Both are represented elsewhere in the Division and are at the disposal of the local corps officers when a need is determined.

It would be nearly impossible to list all the various types of service which are rendered by the Kalamazoo Corps. Following is a partial list of the activities:\(^5\)

Parole Work
Jail and Prison Work

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1. Member of the Corps since 1923. A personal interview.
2. Member of the Corps since 1926. Another interview.
3. The War Cry, March 26, 1932.
5. From the files of the local corps.
Care of the Old
Juvenile Court Work
Caring for Drunks
Rehabilitation of Prostitutes
Caring for Victims of Local Catastrophes
Relief Investigation
Nursing the Sick
Reforming Thieves
Providing Shelters for the Homeless
Caring for Transients
Caring for Flood Victims

On the following page is another detailed list of the functions of the local corps.

A regular part of the Salvation Army service is that of welfare work in the jails and prisons. Prior to the erection of the new building no reports are available of prison work assigned to any particular individual. But beginning in the year 1927, Jacob Robyns became the first regular Jail Sergeant of the Kalamazoo Corps. For the past twenty-one years, Sergeant Robyns has gone to jail to conduct the only regular Sunday services available to men behind the bars in this city.

The regard with which Sergeant Robyns is held by the prisoners is indicated by the number of former county jail inmates who write to him. Following are a few of the letters received by him. These letters, written in prison, ask for the chance to have a new start in life. The chance has usually been given.

Dear Sir:

I have your letter of and was glad to hear from you and that you had not forgotten me. It may seem to you that, on the
SALVATION ARMY

CORPS OFFICERS

Social Service

- Investigation and Counsel
- Medical
- Transportation
- Employment

Transient

- Clothing
- Food
- Shelter

Family

- Hospital
- Food
- Fuel
- Clothing

Religious

- Marriages
- Funerals
- Hospital Visitation
- Jail Visitation
- Home Visitation

Service

- Open Air Meetings
- Indoor Meetings
- Prayer Meetings

Worship

- Company Meetings
- Corp Cadet Class
- Band
- Life Savings Guards in the World

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contrary I have forgotten all of my friends back home, but such is not the case. I have been in touch with several people in the hopes to dispose the remainder of my personal affects. So far I have not been very successful but expect returns any day now. I hope you will pardon my negligence in not writing sooner.

(The letter proceeds with the typical conversation of a man confined in prison. The letter ends with the following closing paragraph.)

I miss the booming "good morning, brother __________," that you and your friends had for me every Sunday morning. And the stories of the old familiar songs that I read about in the War Cry. But, God willing, there will be a day when I will be able to take up where I left off before. Remember me to all my friends in the work of the Lord. I often think of how nice they were to me without ever knowing me before, and how they all helped me at a time when everything was so upset and uncertain. If you ever get a chance to come down here don't fail to get in touch with me. I'll be around someplace. And I will be more than glad to see you again.

Yours sincerely,

Dear Friend:

I have been granted a parole from the Michigan State Prison after serving a term of nine months on a charge of breaking and entering. My release, however, cannot become effective until I receive employment, so the Parole Commissioner can have some assurance that I will be in a position to support myself in some honest calling.

This is my first and only crime. I am white, American, twenty-three years old and single. I am ready for parole and need a job. I am writing to you with hope that you will be able to assist me now to obtain my release from prison by giving me work at this time. I was sent up from the Kalamazoo
County jail. I assure you that I will be grateful and will prove my appreciation by giving you honest and faithful service.

Respectfully yours,

Dear Sir:

I would like very much to get the names of the personnel officers of the following firms, so I may get in touch myself with them in regards to employment on my release from here.

While I was in jail awaiting sentence, I met you, when you held services there on Sunday mornings. Sergeant, at heart I am not really a bad man. But we all have our weak spots and do some wrong, for which God alone can truly forgive. Hoping, Sir, you will try and answer this letter, I remain most sincerely yours,

Dear Friend:

I thought I would drop you a line to let you know that I am in the land of the living. I received 15 months to 2 years recommend of 15 months. I have 6½ months in and good time allowance will bring me out about Christmas time.

We are allowed to write one letter a week. I am working at the green-house, outside trusy, and like it very much. Say, Jake, kindly send me that mans address who come to jail with you. He is in some kind of business on Water Street. Well Jake will close for this time. Am sending my best regards to you all.

Very respectfully yours,

Herewith has been presented a cross-section of

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Letter s from the personal file of Sergeant Jacob Robyns.
some of the letters received by Sergeant Robyns from prisoners confined in various prisons throughout the state.

A number of years ago, before these letters were written and before Sergeant Robyns became a Jail Sergeant, an incident happened which completely changed the life of one man and influenced the lives of scores of others. In preparation for a campaign which started in the Kalamazoo Corps, a revival services and half-nights of prayer were being held. At that time many converts were secured and the comrades were in a highly devout frame of mind, but the campaign proper started at the Watch Night service. For that week end there had been nine conversions and fifty-six candidates for consecration. On January 7 there had been an Ex-Boozers' Meeting, using some of the converts who had been saved from a life of debauchery and drunkenness. One convert went home and emptied the stock of liquor he had in his cellar down the sink. This convert was Sergeant Jacob Robyns. He, too, had been a prisoner on many Sunday mornings due to drunkenness. He is an affirmative answer to Nicodemus' question: "Can a man be born again?"

In 1928, the corps operated the Salvation Army

1 The Kalamazoo Gazette, January 8, 1927.
2 The WarCry, March 26, 1932.
hotel and store at 213 West Ransom Street. The hotel rates varied from nothing to two dollars a week. It was for men who were down and out, or for men who desired work but who had been unfortunate in locating work. The hotel was closed in 1943 during the recent war when the building was condemned and torn down. Those in need of a bed are now sent to the Y. M. C. A. or one of the cheaper hotels. The hotels and the Y send the Salvation Army a bill at the end of the month for services. Meal tickets are also given in the same manner to those in need of food. ¹

The most recent project undertaken by the corps is the combination Pensioners Home and Sheltered Workshop. It is a venture now being launched to aid people handicapped by age and physical impairments. The cost of this project has been set at $55,000. The plan is to make the project self-supporting by charging the pensioners a rental—far less than they pay now—which will take care of the cost of maintaining the home. The building is located at 426 North Burdick Street. The purpose is to provide a comfortable, clean, and safe home for these pensioners and the physically impaired. The Sheltered Workshop, on the main floor of the building, too, is expected to show a small profit when it gets into full operation. The plan is to make the rooms available

¹ Personal interview with Adj. G. A. Foubister, Corps Commandant.
to about forty old men at a rental of between $12 and $15 per month.

The men will have a safe, clean home, with running water in each room, with a large lounge and recreation room where they can visit, read, play games, or listen to the radio when the weather is bad.

The Sheltered Workshop idea grew from a desire expressed by the state rehabilitation department for some agency to take over this work in Kalamazoo. The proposal was placed before the Council of Social Agencies after it had been suggested that an outside agency be brought in to handle the project. A committee was named, consisting of Dr. Harold C. Taylor of the W. E. Upjohn Institute for Community research; John H. Jenkins, executive secretary of the Community Chest; Adj. Foubister; Ben Graham, supervisor of the bureau for social aid; and John Briggs, head of the state rehabilitation office; with George S. Bosse of the Society for Crippled Children and Afflicted Adults the chairman.

This group decided that, rather than bring in a new social service agency, the work could be done by one of the existing agencies, and the Salvation Army's project was the logical spot. That met with the Army board's approval, and the project now (January, 1949) under way resulted.  

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1 The Kalamazoo Gazette, June 27, 1948
To summarize the work done by the Salvation Army in Kalamazoo is difficult. Instead of trying to give figures for the entire period since 1926, I have analyzed the years 1931 and 1936. Possibly the work of the local corps will become more real when one attempts to multiply such activity by sixty-one years of service. For the year 1931, 1,890 families were given relief of one sort or another, representing aid given 8,475 persons in the family groups. The total value in cash of family relief reached $7,235.14. At Christmas time, 232 baskets of food were distributed, supplying 1,000 persons. Three picnics were promoted during the year and were attended by 491 mothers and children. Groceries were supplied to 363 families, coal was supplied to 86 families, and 1,749 garments were distributed for family needs; 321 pairs of shoes were given and 411 articles of furniture distributed. Rents were paid for 18 families and medical aid was given to 5. Cash was advanced to 135 individuals by means of emergency employment, and employment was given 235 persons. Odd jobs were supplied to 83 individuals. The officer in charge interviewed 5,543 persons. A total of 3,893 meals were supplied to the unemployed and 5,381 beds were furnished unemployed persons for one night or more. Transportation was given to 57 persons.

In this same year, garments were supplied for 1,014 transient men and women, and shoes were given to
304 transients. The total number of transient cases aided by the Army workers reached 8,703.

Religious services and other attention was rendered to 2,104 inmates of the county jail in 4½ weeks. These services were conducted in addition to the regular Sunday and evening services held throughout the year at the Army citadel and in the streets of the city.

To make a comparison, I use the year 1936, but this year contains many other forms of help rendered by the corps than those mentioned in 1931. There were, in 1936, 1,333 hours spent in 2,971 visits to the homes of the needy; 5,067 garments and shoes distributed to the needy; 813 pieces of second-hand furniture given to families in need; 743 grocery orders provided for the hungry; 21,000 pounds of coal provided for poor families; 2282 meals served to stranded transients; and 44 jobs found for unemployed.

On Thanksgiving Day 375 dinners were served and at Christmas time 204 well-filled baskets were provided. Christmas toys and treats were given to 550 children. The year's record also shows 138 poor mothers and children were given summer outings; five unwed mothers sent to the Salvation Army maternity home; 5b jail and institutional meetings were held with an attendance of 1,849. There were

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1 The Kalamazoo Gazette, January 1, 1932.
1,364 copies of the War Cry distributed free in institutions and hospitals. In all, the grand total was 17,257 incidents of relief extended.

During the year, 103 street meetings also were held, with an attendance of 2,089 officers and members; 571 senior indoor meetings with an attendance of 22,439 and 485 junior meetings with an attendance of 12,022. There were 139 who acknowledged conversion to Christian living. On the following pages are statistics gathered from the records of the local corps office.

During World War I, the Kalamazoo Corps did splendid and necessary work for the country. George N. Fuller in his Historic Michigan includes the Salvation Army among the very notable organizations of the time. All did their part, and all were honored for their unselfish work in behalf of the national government.

Upon a request for a study of the Kalamazoo Corps of the Salvation Army, the following recommendation was submitted: "In its general work the Army has the confidence and affection of practically all groups and is deserving of its continued support."

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2. Charles A. Weissert and George N. Fuller, Editors, Historic Michigan, Commemorating the 50th Anniversary of the Michigan Pioneer and Historical Society, Chicago, 1939.
CORPS STATISTICS COVERING THIRTEEN YEAR PERIOD

JUNIOR ORGANIZATIONS

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<th>Company Meetings</th>
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<th>Sunbeams</th>
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1 Statistic compiled from the files of the local corps.
CORPS STATISTICS COVERING THIRTEEN YEAR PERIOD\textsuperscript{1}

**SENIOR ORGANIZATIONS**

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<th>Total Meetings</th>
<th>Total Attendance</th>
<th>Senior Band</th>
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\textsuperscript{1} Statistics compiled from the files of the local corps.
SALVATION ARMY
ANALYSIS OF SERVICES FOR YEARS 1943 - 1948*

<table>
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<tr>
<th>ACTIVITIES</th>
<th>1943</th>
<th>1944</th>
<th>1945</th>
<th>1946</th>
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<td>6429</td>
<td>7213</td>
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<td>Total</td>
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<td>11833</td>
<td>17282</td>
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PROGRAM ANALYSIS

Religious—Special Work—Attendance

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<tr>
<th>Activities</th>
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<th>1944</th>
<th>1945</th>
<th>1946</th>
<th>1947</th>
<th>1948</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>1. Band, Songsters</td>
<td>362</td>
<td>992</td>
<td>159</td>
<td>713</td>
<td>2600</td>
<td>3843</td>
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<td>2. Soldier Meetings</td>
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<td>623</td>
<td>432</td>
<td>914</td>
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<td>3. Friendship Club</td>
<td>583</td>
<td>850</td>
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<td>4. Openaire Meetings</td>
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<td>1874</td>
<td>787</td>
<td>2882</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Indoor Meetings</td>
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<td>6980</td>
<td>5932</td>
<td>13831</td>
<td>13923</td>
<td>34089</td>
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<td>6. Young Peoples Legion</td>
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<td>819</td>
<td>826</td>
<td>1296</td>
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<td>7. Sunday School</td>
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<td>2192</td>
<td>6854</td>
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<td>8. Corps Cadets</td>
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<td>183</td>
<td>175</td>
<td>200</td>
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<td>11086</td>
<td>17376</td>
<td>28072</td>
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Other Activities

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<th>1945</th>
<th>1946</th>
<th>1947</th>
<th>1948</th>
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<td>1. Prison Meetings</td>
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<td>52</td>
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<td>1785</td>
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<td>2. Women's Sewing Club</td>
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<td>549</td>
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<td>1159</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>901</td>
<td>601</td>
<td>800</td>
<td>2646</td>
<td>3578</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Total Meetings—all groups | 671  | 1205 | 732  | 550  | 36516 | 65600 |

* Adapted from report made by Salvation Army Officer in Charge, Captain Foubister, to Community Chest, Kalamazoo, Michigan, January, 1949
Kalamazoo is a growing city, rich in the past and firm in her hope for the future. The city has played an important role in the growth and development of the state and Union. Always to augment this role has been the helping hand of the Kalamazoo Corps of the Salvation Army.

On the streets of Kalamazoo are countless men, women, and children, pushed aside by the onrush of progress, neither skilled in labor or trained for positions of usefulness. They are easy victims to the way of least resistance which makes men and rivers cooked. In my opinion, the local corps has saved the city great sums of money because it has been able to rescue those when all hope seemed to be lost. In its primary work of social and religious uplift, it also renders a relief service. It has been and is both religious and humanitarian.

2 The Kalamazoo Gazette, November 5, 1929.
KALAMAZOO CORPS HISTORY OF SA OFFICERS
1926--49

OFFICERS

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Commanding</th>
<th>Assisting</th>
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<td>Ens. John Paton</td>
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<td>June, 1926</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjt. C. McClellan</td>
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<td>June, 1928</td>
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<td>Major C. McClellan</td>
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<td>Jan., 1930</td>
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<td>Major C. McClellan</td>
<td>Capt. Jas. Elcombe</td>
<td>April, 1934</td>
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<td>Adjt. C. Metz</td>
<td>Lt. Lillian Davis</td>
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<td>Adjt. C. Metz</td>
<td>Lt. Solomay Borgerding</td>
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<tr>
<td>Major W. Trevithick</td>
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<td>Major John Ward</td>
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<td>Major John Ward</td>
<td>Lt. Meto Rogers</td>
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<td>Brig. Hoy Marshall</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Lt. Jean Rowan</td>
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<td>Adjt. G. Foubister</td>
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<td>Aug., 1946</td>
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1 Taken from a list of Kalamazoo Corps officers released by the Territorial Headquarters.
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