



Meet the Donut Lassies



In 1917, The Salvation Army responded to a call for help from U.S. soldiers fighting in France during World War I. At the request of Gen. John J. Pershing, around **250 volunteers** traveled overseas to set up small huts near the front lines, providing soldiers with supplies, clothing, and, most importantly, sweet treats.

Faced with the challenge of baking under difficult conditions, two officers — Ensign Margaret Sheldon and Adjutant Helen Purviance — came up with the idea of frying donuts. These simple yet delicious snacks quickly lifted the spirits of the troops, becoming **a symbol of comfort and care** in the midst of war.

The women who served the donuts became known as the **“Donut Lassies”** and are often credited with introducing the donut to the American public when soldiers returned home from the war. Throughout the 1920s and 1930s, The Salvation Army continued to make and distribute donuts, offering a sense of hope during the Great Depression.

When World War II began, volunteers from The Salvation Army once again brought donuts to the front lines, now assisted by the invention of the automatic donut-making machine. In 1938, The Salvation Army in Chicago established the first **National Donut Day**, a tradition created to support those suffering during the Depression and to honor the legacy of the Donut Lassies.

Today, the donut remains a lasting symbol of the comfort The Salvation Army provided to soldiers during both world wars. National Donut Day, celebrated every year on **the first Friday of June**, continues to commemorate the work of the Donut Lassies, with local Salvation Army chapters delivering donuts to those in need as part of their ongoing mission of service and compassion.



#NationalDonutDay