

American Minute with Bill Federer

American Red Cross: Clara Barton caring for soldiers "What could I do but go with them, or work for them and my country? The patriot blood of my father was warm in my veins."

Read American Minute

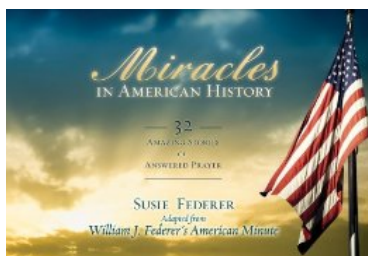
When **Clara Barton** was ten-years-old, her older brother, **David**, fell off the roof of a barn during barn-raising in Massachusetts.



The doctors had given up hope on him, but **Clara** helped nurse him back to a full recovery.

He became a **Captain** and served as **Assistant Quartermaster for the Union Army** during the Civil War ... *continue reading ...*

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[Clara Barton is featured in Miracles in American History](#)

In 1839, at the age of 17, **Clara Barton** earned her **teacher's certificate**.

She taught for 12 years in schools in **Canada** and **West Georgia**.

In 1852, **Clara Barton** moved to **Bordertown, New Jersey**, where she opened the **the first free school in the state**.

Under her leadership, it grew to over 600 students.

In 1855, she moved to Washington, D.C., where she was hired as the **first woman clerk** at the **U.S. Patent Office**.

During **Democrat President James Buchanan's** administration, **Clara** was fired because of her **"Black Republicanism."**

The **Republican Party** was the **first political party in history** that had the **abolition of slavery** in its **party platform**, which was adopted June 18, 1856:

"This Convention of Delegates ... are **opposed** to ... the **extension of slavery** into Free Territory ...

With **our Republican fathers**, we hold it to be a self-evident truth, that **all men are endowed with the inalienable right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness**, and that the **primary object** and ulterior design **of our Federal Government** were to **secure these rights to all persons** ...

Our **Republican fathers** ... **abolished slavery** in all our National Territory (Northwest Ordinance) ...

It becomes our duty to maintain this provision ... **against** all attempts to violate it for the purpose of establishing **slavery** ...

We deny the authority of Congress ... to give **legal existence to slavery** ...

It is both the right and the imperative duty of Congress to **prohibit in the Territories those twin relics of barbarism—Polygamy, and Slavery.**"

When **Republican President Abraham Lincoln** was elected, **Clara Barton** was rehired at the **U.S. Patent Office** as a copyist.

Soon after the Civil War began, there was a riot in Baltimore, Maryland, April 19, 1861, with the first blood being shed in the war.

The **40 wounded Union soldiers** were brought by train to Washington, DC., then transported to a **makeshift medical unit in the unfinished Capitol building.**

Clara Barton volunteered to care for the wounded soldiers, recognizing many of the **6th Massachusetts Militia**, as they were from her home state, some even had been her students.

On her own, she worked with **Ladies' Aid societies** to **collect and distribute medical supplies** for the care of **wounded soldiers.**

In 1862, she received permission to work with the Army on the front lines.

Once, after attempting to carry a wounded soldier off the **Battlefield of Antietam**, September 17, 1862, **Clara Barton** wrote:

"A ball had passed between my body and the right arm which supported him, cutting through the sleeve and passing through his chest from shoulder to shoulder.

There was no more to be done for him and I left him to his rest.

... I have never mended that hole in my sleeve. I wonder if a soldier ever does mend a bullet hole in his coat?"

Clara Barton was present at some of the **bloodiest battles of the Civil War:**

- **Battle of Cedar Mountain;**
- **Battle of Second Manassas (Second Battle of Bull Run);**
- **Battle of Antietam;** and
- **Battle of Fredericksburg.**

The National Park Service recorded that **Clara Barton** first visited **Chatham or "Lacy House"** in early August 1862, bringing food and hospital supplies to help **"her boys."**

She returned during the **Fredericksburg Campaign**, December 1862.

Clara Barton helped care for the wounded soldiers of both sides that were brought into the house.

A physician requested her help in the city, which required her to cross a pontoon bridge over the river.

As she stepped off, an officer offered his hand.

Suddenly a shell passed under their arms, tearing away part of her skirt and his coattail. The wounded officer later died.

Clara Barton set up a **soup kitchen** at the Lacy

House, which became a **makeshift hospital** for the Union 2nd Corps.

With doctors too busy to keep medical records, **Clara** wrote in her diary the names of the men who died and where they were buried.

Her diary is at the **Clara Barton National Historic Site** in Maryland.

On December 13, 1862, the day of the heaviest fighting, **Clara** was in the doorway of the Lacy House when an exploding shell severed a soldier's artery.

She applied the tourniquet that saved his life.

Crossing the river again, a Union provost marshal thought she was a civilian and volunteered to escort her to safety, but looking at the thousands of Union soldiers, she politely declined the offer saying she was the best protected woman in the world.

When a shell struck the door of the room she was in, "she did not flinch, but continued her duties" assisting the doctors.

The next two weeks at Chatham, **Clara** saw "hundreds of the worst wounded men I have ever seen," occupying every room of the house.

They "covered every foot of the floors and porticos" and stair landings. A man "thought himself rich" if he laid under a table where he would not be stepped on.

Clara saw five men stuffed onto four shelves of a cupboard.

Others shivered in the cold muddy yard on blankets, waiting for someone inside to die so they could be brought in.

Clara set up a **soup kitchen** in a tent in the yard to help them.

The Library of Congress has the letter **Clara Barton** wrote to her cousin from the Head Quarters of the 2nd Division, 9th Army Corps-Army of the Potomac Camp near Falmouth, Virginia, December 12th, 1862, 2 o'clock a.m.:

"My dear Cousin Vira: Five minutes time with you; and God only knows what those five minutes might be worth to the many-doomed thousands sleeping around me. It is the night before a battle.

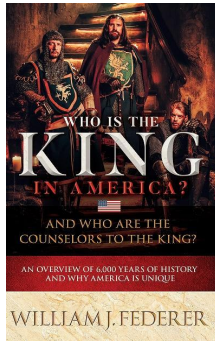
... The enemy, Fredericksburg, and its mighty entrenchments lie before us, the river between -- at tomorrow's dawn our troops will assay to cross, and the guns of the enemy will sweep those frail bridges at every breath. The moon is shining through the soft haze with a brightness almost prophetic.

For the last half hour I have stood alone in the awful stillness of its glimmering light gazing upon the strange sad scene around me striving to say, 'Thy will Oh God be done.'

The camp fires blaze with unwanted brightness, the sentry's tread is still but quick -- the acres of little shelter tents are dark and still as death, no wonder for us as I gazed sorrowfully upon them.

... I thought I could almost hear the slow flap of the grim messenger's wings, as one by one he sought and selected his victims for the morning sacrifice.

Sleep weary one, sleep and rest for tomorrow's toil.
Oh! Sleep and visit in dreams once more the loved
ones nestling at home ..."



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Clara continued:

"They may yet live to dream of you, cold lifeless and bloody, but this dream, soldier, is thy last, paint it brightly, dream it well.

Oh northern mothers, wives and sisters, all unconscious of the hour, would to Heaven that I could bear for you the concentrated woe which is so soon to follow, would that Christ would teach my soul a prayer that would plead to the Father for grace sufficient for you.

God pity and strengthen you every one.

Mine are not the only waking hours, the light yet burns brightly in our kind hearted General's tent where he pens what may be a last farewell to his wife and children and thinks sadly of his fated men.

... Already the roll of the moving artillery is sounded in my ears. The battle draws near and I must catch one hour's sleep for tomorrow's labor.

Good night, dear cousin, and Heaven grant you strength for your more peaceful and less terrible, but not less weary days than mine. Yours in love,

Clara."

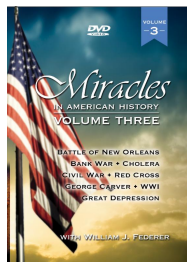
Clara Barton's patriotism came from **her father**, who served in the **Army** under **General "Mad Anthony" Wayne**.

She wrote of **helping soldiers**:

"What could I do but go with them, or **work for them and my country?** The **patriot blood of my father** was warm in my veins."

Toward the end of the war, **Clara** noticed that **thousands of letters were piling up for soldiers**, with no one responding.

She contacted **President Lincoln's office** and was given permission to set up **an office** at 437 1/2 Seventh Street, in Northwest Washington, D.C., **to search for missing soldiers**.



[Miracles in American History \(Vol. 3: Episodes 21-30\)](#)

During the Civil War, eight different orders of **Catholic nuns served as nurses**, numbering over 600 and comprising over a fifth of all female nurses.

Beginning in 1829, **Sisters** who immigrated largely from France and Ireland founded **299 hospitals in America in the 19th century**, including the **Mayo Clinic, St. Vincent's, the Baltimore Infirmary**, and hospitals for the working classes in **Buffalo, Philadelphia and Boston**.

In an era when most women had family obligations

and could only volunteer temporarily as battlefield nurses, the sisters, not having families, were **systematically trained in nursing skills** and serve sacrificially their entire lives.

U.S. Surgeon General Hammond reported to **President Lincoln** that volunteer nurses "**cannot compare in efficiency and faithfulness with the Sisters of Charity.**"

Nursing pioneer **Florence Nightingale** once said:

"What **training** is there to compare with that of a **Catholic nun.**"

A monument was erected in Washington, D.C., to the "**Nursing Nuns of the Battlefield.**"

The inscription reads:

THEY COMFORTED THE DYING, NURSED THE WOUNDED, CARRIED HOPE TO THE IMPRISONED, GAVE IN HIS NAME A DRINK OF WATER TO THE THIRSTY.

TO THE MEMORY AND IN HONOR OF THE VARIOUS **ORDERS OF SISTERS WHO GAVE THEIR SERVICES AS NURSES ON BATTLEFIELDS** AND IN HOSPITALS DURING THE CIVIL WAR.

ERECTED BY THE LADIES AUXILIARY TO THE ANCIENT ORDER OF HIBERNIANS OF AMERICA. A.D. 1924. BY AUTHORITY OF THE CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES.

During the **Franco-German War**, 1870-1871, **Clara Barton** went to Europe where she worked with **Henri Dunant**, founder of the International Red

Cross.

Henri Dunant was the **first recipient** of the **Nobel Peace Prize**.

He founded the **Geneva chapter of the YMCA** (Young Men's Christian Association).

Henri Dunant supported Jews repopulating Palestine.

He was one of the few non-Jews to attend the First Zionist Congress in Basel, 1897.

Theodore Herzl first used the term, "**Christian Zionist**" in reference to **Henri Dunant**.

Henri Dunant's International Red Cross began operating under the symbol of the **Red Crescent** during the **Muslim Ottoman conflict with Russia, 1877-1878**, and that symbol has since been recognized in **33 Islamic States**.

Inspired by **Henri Dunant's International Red Cross**, **Clara Barton** established the **American Red Cross Society**, MAY 21, 1881, serving as its head until 1904.

Clara Barton stated:

"An institution or reform movement that is not selfish, must originate in the recognition of some evil that is adding to the sum of human suffering, or diminishing the sum of happiness.

I may be compelled to face danger, but never fear it, and while our soldiers can stand and fight, I can stand and feed and nurse them.

I am well and strong and young -- young enough to go to the front. If I cannot be a soldier, I'll help soldiers."

During the **Spanish-American War**, 1898, **Clara Barton** helped in hospitals in Cuba.

She wrote:

"In time of peace we must prepare for war, and it is no less a wise benevolence that makes preparation in the hour of peace for assuaging the ills that are sure to accompany war."

President William McKinley stated regarding **Clara Barton** in his Second Annual Message, December 5, 1898:

"It is a pleasure for me to mention in terms of cordial appreciation the timely and useful work of the **American National Red Cross**, both in relief measures preparatory to the campaigns, in sanitary assistance at several of the camps of assemblage, and later, under the able and experienced leadership of the president of the society, **Miss Clara Barton**, on the **fields of battle** and in the hospitals at the front in **Cuba**.

... Working in conjunction with the governmental authorities ... and with the enthusiastic cooperation of many patriotic women and societies in the various States,

the **Red Cross** has fully maintained its already high reputation for intense earnestness and ability to exercise the noble purposes of its international organization, thus justifying the confidence and

support which it has received at the hands of the American people ..."

President McKinley continued:

"To the members and officers of this society and all who aided them in their philanthropic work the sincere and lasting gratitude of the soldiers and the public is due and is freely accorded.

In tracing these events we are constantly reminded of our obligations to **the Divine Master for His watchful care** over us and **His safe guidance**, for which the nation makes reverent acknowledgment and offers **humble prayer for the continuance of His favor.**"

President Woodrow Wilson mentioned the **Red Cross** in his Proclamation of **a Contribution Day for the aid of stricken Jewish people**, January 11, 1916:

"Whereas in the various countries now engaged in war there are nine millions of Jews, the great majority of whom are destitute of food, shelter, and clothing; and ... have been driven from their homes without warning, deprived of an opportunity to make provision for their most elementary wants, causing starvation, disease and untold suffering; and

... Whereas the people of the **United States of America** have learned with sorrow of this terrible plight of millions of human beings and have most generously responded to the cry for help ...

Now, Therefore, I, **Woodrow Wilson**, President of the United States ... do appoint and proclaim January 27, 1916, as a day upon which the people

of the United States may make such contributions as they feel disposed for the **aid of the stricken Jewish people.**

... Contributions may be addressed to the **American Red Cross**, Washington, D.C., which will care for their proper distribution."

Opening the **Second Red Cross Drive** in New York City, **President Woodrow Wilson** stated, May 18, 1918:

"Being members of the **American Red Cross** ... a great fraternity and fellowship which extends all over the world ... **this cross** which these ladies bore here today **is an emblem of Christianity itself** ...

... When you think of this, you realize how the people of the United States are being drawn together into a great intimate family whose heart is being used for the service of the soldiers not only, but for the long night of suffering and terror, in order that they and men everywhere may see the dawn of **a day of righteousness and justice and peace."**

On December 8, 1918, in an appeal of support for the **American Red Cross** just a month after the fighting in World War I had ceased, **President Woodrow Wilson** stated:

"One year ago, twenty-two million Americans, by enrolling as members of the **Red Cross** at Christmas time, sent to the men who were fighting our battles overseas a stimulating message of cheer and good-will ...

Now, by God's grace, the **Red Cross Christmas message** of 1918 is to be a message of peace as

well as a message of good-will."

On May 1, 1940, **President Franklin D. Roosevelt** greeted the chairman of the **American National Red Cross**, Norman H. Davis, in Washington, D.C.:

"The great International **Red Cross** organization, founded 76 years ago to bring mercy to the battlefield ...

... I am confident that whatever may be the problems which intensification of warfare may bring, the American people will respond to any appeal for funds when the **Red Cross** deems it necessary to call upon them for additional aid.

By such response we can aid in sustaining the **spirit and morale** of those in distress abroad until **the happy day we all pray for**, when hostilities shall cease."

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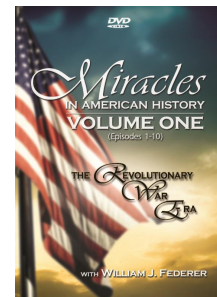
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