

Clara Barton: Civil War Hero

War is frightening, because supplies are scarce and people are fighting. It is not fun for people who stay home and have to take care of their homes and towns, but it is especially hard on the soldiers. One woman set out to help as many soldiers as she could during the Civil War, even on the front lines of the battlefield! Her name was Clara Barton.

Clara Barton was born in 1821 in Massachusetts. She worked hard from a young age, helping around the house and taking care of her older siblings. When she was seventeen, she decided to work as a teacher. At that time, men were paid a lot more to work the same jobs as women. Clara worked hard to make sure she got paid the same amount as men for doing the same job. She continued fighting for equal rights for women when she worked in an office in Washington, D.C. in the mid-1850s.

The Civil War began in 1861. Clara knew some soldiers who became injured in nearby battles, so she went to help them by gathering medical supplies, giving the supplies to the soldiers who needed them, and sometimes helping to nurse the soldiers back to health.



She wanted to help even more soldiers, so she sent letters asking for help, and placed advertisements in magazines to ask people to donate supplies for the soldiers. She traveled with the army to different battles around the country, gathering supplies and taking care of soldiers. She would care for soldiers not just in hospitals, but on the actual battlefields, putting herself in danger. One time she was caring for a soldier when a bullet went right through her sleeve! She was very lucky not to get hurt. The soldiers were glad to see her, though, and she became known as the "Angel of the Battlefield."

After the Civil War was over, Clara still wanted to help. She decided to help by tracking down missing soldiers so that their families would know what happened to the soldiers. She worked very hard for many years, but then became sick. Her doctor told her to take some time to rest, so she went to Europe. While in Europe, Clara learned about the Red Cross organization. She wanted to bring the Red Cross to America, so that she could continue to help as many people as possible. She returned to the United States of America, and in 1881, the American Red Cross began, with Clara as the president of the organization. The American Red Cross gathered supplies to help people who needed relief from floods, tornados, and other disasters. She was president until 1904, but continued to help people by teaching first aid strategies and ways to be prepared for emergencies, so more people could help others.

Clara Barton died in 1912, when she was 90 years old. She was a hero to many people because she was brave on the battlefield, helped people of all kinds, and began an organization that still helps people today.



1. What did Clara Barton fight for in the mid 1850's?

In what paragraph did you find the answer for question 1?

2. What does the word "nurse" mean in paragraph 3?

3. List three ways that Clara Barton helped soldiers BEFORE she started her organization.

4. Do you think The Red Cross is a good example of an organization that helps the community?
Why or why not?