



# Foundation Document Overview

## Clara Barton National Historic Site

Maryland



### Contact Information

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## Purpose



*The purpose of CLARA BARTON NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE is to tell the story of Clara Barton and the early years of the organization she founded, the American Red Cross, through the preservation and interpretation of her historic home and associated artifacts.*



## Significance

Significance statements express why Clara Barton National Historic Site resources and values are important enough to merit national park unit designation. Statements of significance describe why an area is important within a global, national, regional, and systemwide context. These statements are linked to the purpose of the park unit, and are supported by data, research, and consensus. Significance statements describe the distinctive nature of the park and inform management decisions, focusing efforts on preserving and protecting the most important resources and values of the park unit.

- The Clara Barton National Historic Site served as the first permanent headquarters of the American Red Cross and serves as a tangible reminder of Miss Barton's accomplishments as the organization's founder and first president.
- In an era when women were not given the same opportunities as men, Clara Barton gained international recognition for her humanitarian relief efforts in the United States and abroad, including her famous role during the American Civil War as the "Angel of the Battlefield."
- Clara Barton National Historic Site was one of the first national historic sites dedicated to recognizing the accomplishments of a female American.
- Clara Barton National Historic Site reflects Miss Barton's work to develop a model for disaster recovery and response that is still in use today by the American Red Cross.
- Clara Barton National Historic Site curates the largest number of objects related to Clara Barton and the early years of the American Red Cross in the national park system.
- The efficient and pragmatic design of Clara Barton's home as a supply warehouse, staff living quarters, and office reflects Clara Barton's organizational vision for the American Red Cross and provides an outstanding opportunity for visitors to understand how the organization functioned in its first permanent headquarters.

## Fundamental Resources and Values

Fundamental resources and values are those features, systems, processes, experiences, stories, scenes, sounds, smells, or other attributes determined to merit primary consideration during planning and management processes because they are essential to achieving the purpose of the park and maintaining its significance.

- **Clara Barton House and Cultural Landscape.**

Clara Barton House was occupied by Clara Barton as her residence from 1897 to 1912 and served the American Red Cross as its first permanent headquarters from 1897 to 1904 and as a supply warehouse from 1891 to 1904. The Red Cross hotels constructed at Johnstown in the wake of the flood served as the inspiration for the building. Much of the house and many of its furnishings are original to Miss Barton or her family, or are original to the period.

- **Museum Collections.** The museum collections contain a number of historical and archeological objects as well as extensive archives related to Clara Barton. A diary associated with Clara Barton, her letters, desk, bed, clothing, and family china are among the significant objects contained in the collections. In addition, the site also holds an extensive noncirculating research library. These collections provide a tangible link to Clara Barton and opportunities for visitors and researchers to broaden their understanding of her life, the experience of women during the 19th century, and a glimpse into life during the Victorian Era.

- **Educating and Inspiring Others to Serve.** Telling the story of Clara Barton's life and times is a critical component of the park's enabling legislation. Clara Barton has inspired countless individuals to carry on the tradition of service and aid toward others. Today visitors are able to learn about Clara Barton and the important lessons she taught the nation in emergency preparedness, disaster recovery, and first aid. Clara Barton National Historic Site exists in part to inspire others to carry on this legacy and to preserve a tangible connection to Miss Barton and her remarkable achievements.

## Interpretive Themes

Interpretive themes are often described as the key stories or concepts that visitors should understand after visiting a park—they define the most important ideas or concepts communicated to visitors about a park unit. Themes are derived from—and should reflect—park purpose, significance, resources, and values. The set of interpretive themes is complete when it provides the structure necessary for park staff to develop opportunities for visitors to explore and relate to all of the park significances and fundamental resources and values.

- Early History of American Red Cross
- A Lifetime of Service
- Life and Time of Clara Barton
- The House

## Other Important Resources and Values

Clara Barton National Historic Site contains other resources and values that may not be fundamental to the purpose and significance of the park, but are important to consider in management and planning decisions. These are referred to as other important resources and values.

Clara Barton National Historic Site has the following other important resources and values:

- The Potomac River Viewshed
- Archeological Resources



## Description



Clara Barton National Historic Site was established by Congress on October 26, 1974, through Public Law 93-486. The site was created to honor the founder of the American Red Cross and consists of Miss Barton's home during the last 15 years of her life. The structure, which is also a national historic landmark, illustrates her dedication and concern for those less fortunate than herself.

Before 1861, Miss Barton had worked as a school teacher in Massachusetts and New Jersey, and as a recording clerk and a copyist at the U. S. Patent Office in Washington, D.C. On April 19, 1861—just days after the start of the Civil War—she treated soldiers of the 6th Massachusetts Infantry who had been mobbed by southern-sympathizing Baltimoreans. Thus began a new career for Miss Barton, one of service to wounded soldiers.

Throughout the Civil War, Miss Barton traveled to various battlefields to distribute supplies, aid the wounded, and help establish field hospitals. After the war was over, she was a critical part of the successful effort to identify the graves of nearly 13,000 men at Andersonville Prison in Georgia, and she was instrumental in the establishment of Andersonville National Cemetery. She also established The Office of Correspondence with Friends of the Missing Men of the United States Army and directed a four-year search for missing men. In the early 1870s, Miss Barton organized relief efforts for the Franco-Prussian War, under sponsorship of the International Red Cross and the German Red Cross.

After a period of ill health and recuperation, Miss Barton began a campaign to garner support for the American Association of the Red Cross, which was officially formed on May 21, 1881. Miss Barton was elected president of the organization at a meeting held June 9 in Washington, D.C. Beginning in August 1881, the American Red Cross began assisting with relief efforts after disasters such as floods, fires, and epidemics, and in August 1884 the International Red Cross adopted the "American Amendment" to allow the Red Cross to provide disaster relief in peacetime as well as wartime.

In 1891, a building was constructed for Miss Barton as part of Edwin and Edward Baltzley's Chautauqua in Glen Echo, Maryland, a few miles northwest of Washington, D.C. The building was primarily used as a Red Cross warehouse for several years. Miss Barton began to occupy the house in 1897, and it was remodeled to serve three functions: a supply warehouse, the American Red Cross headquarters, and Miss Barton's home until her death in 1912 at the age of 90.

Today the Clara Barton National Historic Site serves to honor this remarkable person. Clara Barton dedicated her life to help others in times of need, both home and abroad, in peacetime as well as during military engagements.