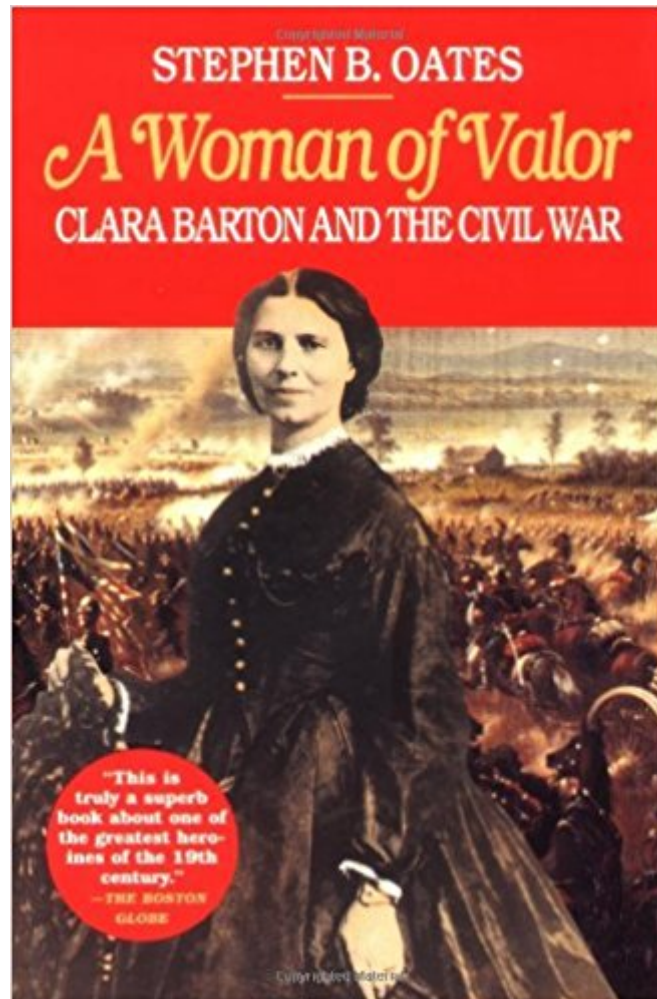


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# Woman Of Valor: Clara Barton And The Civil War



## Synopsis

When the Civil War broke out, Clara Barton wanted more than anything to be a Union soldier, an impossible dream for a thirty-nine-year-old woman, who stood a slender five feet tall. Determined to serve, she became a veritable soldier, a nurse, and a one-woman relief agency operating in the heart of the conflict. Now, award-winning author Stephen B. Oates, drawing on archival materials not used by her previous biographers, has written the first complete account of Clara Barton's active engagement in the Civil War. By the summer of 1862, with no institutional affiliation or official government appointment, but impelled by a sense of duty and a need to heal, she made her way to the front lines and the heat of battle. Oates tells the dramatic story of this woman who gave the world a new definition of courage, supplying medical relief to the wounded at some of the most famous battles of the war -- including Second Bull Run, Antietam, Fredericksburg, Battery Wagner, the Wilderness, Spotsylvania, and Petersburg. Under fire with only her will as a shield, she worked while ankle deep in gore, in hellish makeshift battlefield hospitals -- a bullet-riddled farmhouse, a crumbling mansion, a windblown tent. Committed to healing soldiers' spirits as well as their bodies, she served not only as nurse and relief worker, but as surrogate mother, sister, wife, or sweetheart to thousands of sick, wounded, and dying men. Her contribution to the Union was incalculable and unique. It also became the defining event in Barton's life, giving her the opportunity as a woman to reach out for a new role and to define a new profession. Nursing, regarded as a menial service before the war, became a trained, paid occupation after the conflict. Although Barton went on to become the founder and first president of the Red Cross, the accomplishment for which she is best known, *A Woman of Valor* convinces us that her experience on the killing fields of the Civil War was her most extraordinary achievement.

## Book Information

Paperback: 527 pages

Publisher: Free Press; Reprint edition (May 1, 1995)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0028740122

ISBN-13: 978-0028740126

Product Dimensions: 6.1 x 1.3 x 9.2 inches

Shipping Weight: 2 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.7 out of 5 stars [See all reviews](#) (24 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #242,739 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #53 in [Books > History >](#)

Americas > United States > Civil War > Women #293 in Books > Biographies & Memoirs > Historical > United States > Civil War #1043 in Books > History > World > Women in History

## Customer Reviews

As a nurse I have heard and read about Clara Barton for years. This book finally reinvents the tired images - melodramatic icon of female self sacrifice and courage, angel on earth and of the battlefield - and offers the reader a compelling, warm and very real picture of the person and personality of this famous individual. We see all aspects of Clara's character and the impact of the many choices she makes. We even get to see a few of the skeletons in her closet. Without this book, I doubt we would know that there were any! The amount of detail - and it is considerable - is so beautifully woven into the historical narrative that the story, like the Civil War, sweeps the reader from one new experience to the next. Read this and you will feel the jolting of army wagons along rutted roads, struggle to rest as the canvas flaps of your tent crack and strain in storms, gallop with joyful abandon along the beaches at Hilton Head - and much more. I purchased my copy at Gettysburg and it is the best "souvenir" purchase I ever made. Bravo to Stephen Oates!

Mr. Oates has done it again. You will know Clara Barton ambitions, downfalls, her emotions as well as her eager drive and personal duty to serve those who suffered so much during the Civil War years. The contents of this book will jump out at you and you'll feel that you're right next to the personalities involved. Oh, what women had to go through to pursue a dream or an ambition to contribute to society. Clara has a heart of gold as her patients in and off the field well knew, yet she was being torn apart on the inside by the constant fear that she wasn't doing enough for "her boys". Her personal life was put on the back shelf as she pursued her one desire, to help those who were less fortunate. You'll follow Clara as she goes through the blood, sweat, tears, agony and the horrors of the war. This is a true story of a dark chapter in our American history when brother fought against brother literally. It is also of a dream turned into reality that Clara Barton followed with a sincere robust ambition to pursue the betterment of her fellow man. By caring for the soldiers on the battlefield, she proved to the Union Army that those suffering needed love, compassion and of course medical care where it was most needed - on the front lines of battle. This is a must read book for those interested in hero's, Civil War history or nursing history. Stephen B. Oates is the author of other fine books in history and ranks right up there with the big boys in the writings of history.

The book is wonderful. Every woman should read it. It shows that anyone can stand out in a crowd

and lend a hand no matter what form it takes. An inspiration to women everywhere! A very real account of her life, feels as if you are there with her. Please read it!

Stephen Oates is an outstanding narrative historian and a first-rate biographer. In this volume, he explores the life of one of the most remarkable woman in American history. Clara Barton was absolutely unwilling to accept the limited, simplistic role 19th Century society designed for women. Well-educated and dedicated to public service to the detriment of any personal life, she accomplished more in a lifetime than most women would a century later when opportunities were much easier for them to find. One of the finer qualities of Oates' writing is a complete unwillingness to pass judgement. Viewed from the perspective of her time, Clara Barton was pushy, ambitious, and entirely too willing to do things that were inappropriate or "unfeminine" in the pursuit of her goals. Viewed from a more modern time, these qualities are less objectionable, but at times she still seems to be an overpowering force that many men today would find difficult to endure. Oates offers few if any opinions on Clara's personality but gives us a completely honest and utterly objective look at a woman who was absolutely unwilling to conform to society's expectations. One can only wonder to what heights of government service she would have aspired if she were born in the 20th century. I suspect from reading Oates' account of her personality and ingenuity that she would have won my vote.

I am still in the process of reading this book with my daughter for a book report. The author has taken information from real people and directly from Miss Clara Barton's own diaries. It makes for a very interesting story. The reader is guided through the story and all the information about where she is and what is happening is very real. Descriptions abound throughout and the storyteller leaves the reader wanting more. I would say, the only downside is probably that the book is divided into only parts and not chapters. I had to divide the book myself so that we could digest the story in small doses for discussion. One other thing that I did not realize, Miss Barton lead a very storied life and some rather graphics details were included that we did not find tasteful or useful for the report and were therefore omitted from our reading. This, by-the-way was not any of the gory battle scenes, but her love life. On the whole, I have enjoyed the biography thus far and would recommend it for more mature audiences to read.

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