



What Would Clara Barton Wear?



Clara Barton, Red Cross-Era, 1906



Clara Barton, Civil War-Era, 1865

Clara Barton (1821-1912), a former school teacher and Patent Office clerk, was a relief worker during the Civil War (1861-1865). She collected and organized supplies, as well as treated wounded soldiers on the battlefields. Miss Barton provided aid to the sick and injured on both sides. She also established an office to locate missing soldiers of war. After learning of the International Red Cross, based in Switzerland, which aided victims of war, Clara Barton founded the American Red Cross in 1881. Her organization also provided assistance during natural disasters and peacetime. Clara Barton was a woman who, through determination and perseverance, was able to accomplish what few women of her time were able to do.

Civil War-Era Clothing

Hair



Then: Clara Barton's hair would have been parted in the middle of her head and pulled back away from her face with a low bun at the back of her neck. Women did not generally have bangs. All hair was pulled away from the face. Women wore their hair so that the fullest part of it was at or below their ears. This brought attention to the width of their face, which was considered very stylish.

Now: You can wear your hair like Clara Barton. If you have long hair, pull your hair back into a low bun. Use hair pins to pin back any bangs. If you have short hair, pin your hair back close to your head.

Shirt

Then: Shirts were tucked into skirts and necklines were very close to the back of the neck with collars closed. Shirts were either buttoned or fastened up the front. Sleeves were very full at the elbows and gathered at the wrists. It was fashionable to emphasize the width of the shoulders and the narrowness of the waist.

Now: You probably have a shirt in your closet that is similar to one Clara Barton would have worn. Find an average button-up, collared shirt. Make sure that it is a solid color or has a very small pattern. Remember to button the top button and the cuffs. If you don't have a shirt like this, choose any long-sleeve shirt with a high neck.

Skirt

Then: Miss Barton would have worn a long skirt that came down to her feet or the floor with a hoop skirt. A hoop skirt was a large, stiff slip or petticoat that made a dress stand out several feet from the legs. These were not worn while working because they would get in the way. Skirts also had a very high, straight waistline.

Now: Look in your closet for a long skirt of a dark color that comes down to at least your ankles. If you have a long slip, you can wear it underneath to fill out your skirt. You could even wear another skirt under your skirt. Remember, no pants!

Shoes



Then: Clara Barton would have worn shoes that slipped on, buckled, or laced up the front. Because she spent time collecting and bringing supplies to the battlefield, her shoes needed to be sturdy with a low heel.

Now: Find a pair of simple shoes, not sneakers, to wear with the rest of your costume. Wear tights or socks that are made of plain cotton or wool.

Apron or Pinafore

Then: Clara Barton would have worn an apron or pinafore over her clothing to protect from wear and stains.

Now: Find a plain apron that you can wear over your shirt and skirt. Now you are ready for the battlefield.

Red Cross-Era Clothing

Hair



Then: Hair was still pulled back away from the face, but it was now piled high on top of the head to make a person appear taller. However, Clara Barton did not often wear her hair in the popular style of the day. She still wore her hair low in the back of her head and full around the ears.

Now: To create this look, pull your hair up in a bun. If you have short hair, use hair pins to pin your hair away from your face or up on top of your head.

Shirt

Then: Necklines were higher. Collars extended several inches upward from the bottom of the throat. Sleeves were now puffed out at the shoulders instead of the elbows. They were also very snug and fit close around the forearms and wrists.

Now: A turtleneck or a collared, button-up shirt will work well for this. Make sure to button the top button and the cuffs. Wear a shirt with puffy shoulders, if you have one.

Skirt

Then: Large hoops were no longer worn beneath skirts. Rather, skirts were narrower and fuller in the back. The waistline was lower, yet it still emphasized the narrowness of the waist.

Now: Look in your closet for a long skirt of a dark color or one that comes down at least to your ankles.

Shoes



Then: Clara Barton would have worn shoes that slipped on, buckled, or laced up the front. Because she spent time collecting and bringing supplies to disaster sites, her shoes needed to be sturdy with a low heel.

Now: Find a pair of simple shoes, not sneakers, to wear with the rest of your costume. Wear tights or socks that are made of plain cotton or wool.



Activity Page

Get Your Class Involved!



Make Your Own Red Cross Pin:

As you see in the picture on the left, Clara Barton often wore a Red Cross pin on the front of her collar. You can make your own Red Cross Pin.

1. Cut out a circle on white paper about 1½ inches in diameter.
2. In the center of the circle, draw a red cross like the one worn by Clara Barton in the photograph.
3. Tape or pin this piece of paper to the front of your collar.

Make Your Own Bonnet:

1. To make your own bonnet, like what Clara Barton would have worn during the Civil War, you will need construction paper, tape, and ribbon.
2. Find a piece of rectangular paper that will fit around your head from ear to ear. You may use two pieces of colored 8 inch x 10 inch construction paper taped together on the 8 inch sides.
3. On both of the long sides, cut three 2 inch. slits on each side of the center line.
4. Fold the slits upward. Bend the paper so that it fits around your head.
5. Notice that the folded tabs will cross over each other. Tape them in place.
6. Tape or staple ribbon to both bottom corners of the front to make a tie. Add any decorations you want.



Make Your Own Decorated Hat:

To make your own hat similar to what Clara Barton would have worn during her work with the Red Cross:

1. Visit your local craft store. Purchase a small straw hat, some wide ribbon, and a few fake flowers. You can also use any materials you have at home.
2. Glue the ribbon around the brim and glue the flowers to the front of the hat. All of these items can be found at your local craft store.

