"If the alleviation of human miseries, the saving of life, and the bringing of helplessness and dependence back to methods of self-sustenance and independence are counted among the philanthropic movements of the day, then … it would seem that the Red Cross movement has some "significance" in connection with philanthropy."¹

In September 1900 Clara Barton had emerged as the undisputed president of the American National Red Cross, but her security in that position was not altogether assured.² On June 6, 1900, President William McKinley signed an act of Congress incorporating the American National Red Cross. It had first been chartered in the United States in 1881 after Barton had spent years campaigning, cajoling, and lobbying for a permanent relief organization. Her hard work was rewarded that June by congressional incorporation of the organization, making it more difficult for competing relief organizations to bear the same honor or to be officially recognized by the International Red Cross. The American Red Cross had just finished its task of establishing hospitals and orphanages in Cuba in the wake of the Spanish American War. The effort had been fraught with worry about finances and competition from other relief agencies such as the White Cross and the rival New York Red Cross, which appeared more flush and more efficient. This made Barton uneasy that her Red Cross would be eclipsed by another in the public’s mind or that there were those within the organization who might mutiny and deny her the authority to which she felt entitled. The 1900 incorporation came at time when some were questioning her leadership abilities, and even she had thought it might be time to retire.³

The 1900 incorporation made significant changes in the way the Red Cross was to be administered. It required new by-laws and called for the election of officers, all of whom were to report to a board of control, which was also elected by the organization’s members. This gave more power to the board of control and the new executive committee and brought into the leadership ranks men and women of wealth and social status. Once the incorporation had been accomplished, in a speech before her enthusiastic supporters, Barton offered to resign from the presidency. The officers, perhaps moved by her eloquence, would have none of it and reelected her to another term. For the time being her critics were quieted.⁴

The Galveston disaster of September 8, 1900, coming just three months after Red Cross incorporation, presented an opportunity for Barton to once again demonstrate her mettle in the field and to elevate the Red Cross to the position of undisputed leading charitable organization for emergency relief in the United States. This proved to be her last field experience, and it deserves analysis in the face of controversies surrounding her
age and her ability to lead the Red Cross into the twentieth century. Whereas her critics viewed her as difficult to work with -- employing personal methods of administering relief goods and irregular accounting methods -- southern historians might well see another side to her personality and to her contributions to Galveston’s recovery. As a woman raised in the North with a broad national reputation, she brought to Galveston a more enlightened vision of race relations and gender issues as well as a more humanitarian response to the homeless.

When news of the crisis in Galveston reached her, she responded immediately and valiantly by rushing to the island, by bringing in over $100,000 in money and goods for the relief effort, and by distributing items to thousands of homeless, destitute, and grieving residents of the island. The results of her presence in Galveston, however, went far beyond the immediate relief needs of the people. In her dealings with city officials, she carefully crafted a socially progressive role for middle-class white women, attempted to set a more positive example for race relations, and, after her vast experience with disaster survivors, introduced concepts of permanent individual housing for the homeless. She repeatedly took issue with members of the Central Relief Committee, which emerged as the organizing body after the storm, advising them in ways that countered southern traditions with respect to race and gender and that set a long-range plan for storm survivors. While her relationship with the all-male Central Relief Committee was cordial, there were moments in her six-week stay when she pushed her own vision of a restored Galveston onto the committee and chided them for their insensitivity. While others may have seen Clara Barton as too old or too old fashioned, she should be considered progressive in her ability to see beyond southern cultural limitations and to act in accordance with her broad experience.5

The hurricane of September 8, 1900 and its destructive path through Galveston and other parts of Texas are by now well known. It is today still considered the nation’s worst natural disaster in terms of loss of life. The deadly storm slammed into Galveston, a barrier island in the Gulf of Mexico just twenty-seven miles long and three miles wide at its widest point. The island’s highest elevation at the time of the storm was nine feet above sea level. Galvestonians were accustomed to storms, wettings, and swells, which in the past had submerged the island briefly. But the 1900 storm was probably a category four hurricane with winds over 131 miles per hour and with a fifteen-foot storm surge; it killed at least 6,000 of 38,000 citizens in a fifteen-hour period. It demolished or damaged beyond repair approximately 4,000 or nearly two-thirds of the city’s structures, and it destroyed between $17 and $30 million worth of property. Whole neighborhoods that had once stood within a short walk of the beach were completely razed. Sarah Littlejohn, after recovering from a harrowing night of riding out the storm with her parents, noticed how strange the newly formed landscape appeared. "We looked out of the window and of all the beautiful homes that were between our house and the beach not one was left. It is just a clean sweep; nothing but desolation. I can hardly realize what has happened but when I look at the Gulf I knew we could not see it from our house before this storm and it seems so strange." The hurricane, like a giant scythe, swiped clean the south and the east side of the city creating a 1,500-acre arc of denuded land from the far eastern end of the island reaching out to the west end. Those structures closest to the coast suffered the most damage as wind and waves knocked the vulnerable wooden houses off their foundations. When these houses, barns, and outbuildings broke up, their loosened pieces became floating torpedoes or flying
hammers striking anything in their path with such force that structure upon structure collapsed, continuing the ghastly process of demolition. The battering ram effect of this night of horror resulted in a three-mile-long, thirty-foot high mountain of debris in the middle of the island. Water had completely covered the island in some places as much as fifteen feet; all of the bridges from the island to the mainland were gone, as were the telegraph, telephone, and electric cables. Only the water main, running from wells on the mainland to the island, escaped harm. But the water pumping station was a mass of rubble.6

All the public buildings in the city were damaged. City hall, with its immense tower nearly intact, stood roofless. St. Patrick’s Catholic Church, one of the largest in the city, lost its 220-foot bell tower when it came crashing down into the nave, destroying roof, walls, and side chapels. Of the white Protestant churches, twenty-two (five of them brick) were destroyed as were all fourteen of the African American churches. The wharf was a wreck, and ships formerly anchored in the bay were found blown over land ten to twenty miles north of the bay. As horrible as the scenes of destruction were, nothing could compare with the sight of bodies lying about the rubble, floating in the bay, draped across the bent and twisted salt cedars, or lying naked in the tangled mass of debris.7

On Sunday, the day after the storm, a team of six men made its way north to Houston to get the word out to Texas governor Joseph D. Sayers and President William McKinley that the city was in ruins. Meanwhile, on the island, surviving city leaders met to devise an emergency Central Relief Committee for Galveston Storm Sufferers (CRC) with Mayor Walter C. Jones as chairman. The subcommittees took over the tasks immediately needed: public safety, care of the injured, burial of the dead, finances, correspondence, and relief and distribution of food and water. Little in the way of burial was accomplished. The ground was too saturated to receive the remains, and the morgues quickly filled with decomposing bodies. An attempt to bury the corpses at sea failed when the bodies washed ashore. Finally, because of the September heat and the rapid rate of decomposition, it was decided to burn the bodies of humans and animals in funeral pyres across the beaches and on the vacant lots. Nothing had prepared citizens for the smoky haze that settled over the island or for the lingering smell of burning flesh and hair. Despondent and demoralized, Galveston citizens began their long process toward recovery.8

When seventy-eight-year-old Clara Barton heard of the hurricane on September 10, she had just returned to Washington D.C. from Chicago and was fatigued from her journey. Nonetheless, she answered the call to bring relief to the island city. She no doubt understood the importance of her mission both to her own position as president of the newly reincorporated Red Cross as well as to the claim to legitimacy for her organization. She needed to position the American National Red Cross as the premier relief organization in the nation – against all competing groups. Here was her chance. The newly devised board of control advised against her going, citing her recent illness and her age as the reasons. Against their advice, she went anyway, bringing with her a team of eight Red Cross staff members. It would be the last such on-site emergency relief work that she personally attended.9

The party left Washington D.C., on the 13th, traveled through Atlanta, New Orleans, and Houston, where they first encountered the governor’s committee for relief work and the mayor, who grandly offered transportation to the island. The difficult part of the trip was just beginning. The travel between Houston and Galveston, a mere fifty
miles, took twenty-four hours. Because of a miscommunication, there was no steamer awaiting the Red Cross members when they arrived in Texas City. Instead they spent an uncomfortable night on the train and took nourishment from volunteers of the Salvation Army. Finally, early Monday morning a steamer carrying refugees from the island, docked, unloaded its unhappy passengers, and then transported the Red Cross workers across the bay. They arrived in Galveston on September 17, nine days after the hurricane had struck. There they met Mayor Walter C. Jones at the wharf and were taken through littered streets to the Tremont Hotel, the only suitable lodgings in the city. At first the volunteers were welcomed as Red Cross nurses, but Barton corrected this mistake by stating that they were there to administer relief, to aid city relief workers, and to help disaster victims.\footnote{10}

After the initial meeting, Clara Barton, took to her bed for a good night’s rest. This caused some in her party to suspect that she was too frail for the hardships of field work. Vice-president Ellen Mussey, her chief rival on the team, made plans to bring Barton back to headquarters on a railway car and a navy cutter. As soon as Barton awoke and heard of the plan to remove her and thus discredit her leadership, she labeled the fiasco “a piece of nonsense which I both forbid and rebuked.” Shortly thereafter Ellen Mussey was sent packing instead of Clara Barton, who rallied to direct operations from her day bed. She was helped in this by the arrival on September 18 of her nephew, Stephen E. Barton, who came to prop up his ailing aunt and act as general manager for the Red Cross mission. His first telegraph message from the island stated: "Property destruction is simply appalling [sic]. Extent is not half realized."\footnote{11}

Soon the Red Cross workers would come to know the full extent of the catastrophe. After touring the city, Barton wrote:

\begin{quote}
It was one of those monstrosities of nature which defied exaggeration and fiendishly laughed at all tame attempts of words to picture the scene it had prepared. The churches, the great business houses, the elegant residences of the cultured and opulent, the modest little homes of laborers of a city of nearly forty thousand people; the center of foreign shipping and railroad traffic lay in splinters and debris piled twenty feet above the surface, and the crushed bodies, dead and dying, of nearly ten thousand of its citizens lay under them.\footnote{12}
\end{quote}

Having witnessed the incredible damage, the Red Cross workers began to set up their headquarters and get to work. John Sealy, one of Galveston’s prominent businessmen, donated a four-story warehouse in the heart of the commercial district for Red Cross operations. Then Barton began the process of calling on the nation to send whatever it could – clothing, food, money – for relief of those who had lost everything in the storm. This was an important contribution to the people of Galveston, for as a nationally known humanitarian, she had won the national trust. Her words convinced a skeptical public that the tragedy was real and any relief gifts would be handled carefully through the Red Cross.\footnote{13} She was able to let the nation know what was needed and how much; she put in an appeal for disinfectants, for light clothing and then later for winter clothing, for building materials, and for money.\footnote{14} Donors, who might have hesitated to
send money or goods to an unknown relief committee, willingly sent their donations to the Red Cross, sure that their gifts would be fairly distributed to the needy. One woman from Rathbone, Ohio, wrote, "I have been wishing ever since I knew of the disaster in Galveston that I knew to whom to send money so that it would be sure of reaching some needy person and was very glad when I saw by the papers that you are there." Even former supplicants responded to the call for donations. Steel workers from the Cambria Steel Company in Johnstown, Pennsylvania, sent $61. They had survived the Johnstown flood of 1889 and were now willing to collect money for new flood victims. Barton felt a special gratitude to those whom the Red Cross had formerly helped.\textsuperscript{15}

Barton had many national contacts as well, some she had worked with in former disasters, others were Red Cross societies that provided relief goods and money. The Associate Society of the Red Cross of Philadelphia sent $1,000. The Red Cross of San Francisco sent eleven boxes and two trunk loads full of goods. From the Red Cross societies of New Orleans, Dansville, New York, Frederick, Maryland, and Reno, Nevada, came hundreds of dollars and supplies. Barton put out a call for disinfectants to "protect the living against the dead." The New York newspapers, always looking for public approbation, sent fifty-seven barrels of carbolic acid and 2,000 pounds of disinfectants. From Washington D.C. came 2,840 pounds of lime. Food, clothing, medical supplies, household goods began arriving by boat – three railroad cars full of flour, 75 alcohol burning stoves, two portable hospitals, and seven live hens arrived for distribution. The overworked staff, and even Barton herself with the help of her "stenographer and one or two lady friends," kept track of all donations, writing thank you letters, instructing donors what to send and where to send it, forwarding packages to relatives in the area, seeing dignitaries, and calming supplicants.\textsuperscript{16}

As a result of Barton’s appeals, donations of all kinds came from disparate parts of the United States. The \textit{New York World} funneled money to Barton in Galveston; Wells Fargo Express and the Pullman Palace Car Company made arrangements for the transport of the Red Cross workers. The railroads and the Mallory Shipping Line sent goods to Galveston free of freight charges. The summary effect was substantial: 1,552 cases, 258 barrels, 542 packages, and 13 casks of clothing, bedding, shoes, crockery, groceries, disinfectants, medical supplies, and hardware came to their warehouse. The monetary gifts sent to the Red Cross for Galveston amounted to $17,341. Estimates for the total Red Cross donations in money and in kind amounted to $120,000.\textsuperscript{17}

By September 20, the Red Cross workers had received their first shipment of relief goods. Sorting stood as one of the most time consuming tasks – unpacking men’s, women’s and children’s clothing, shoes, bedding, and household items. The workers "fitted up temporary beds and a large kitchen in the warehouse" for themselves and for the arriving orphans who would stay there. Eventually, workers sent many of the goods to the ward relief stations, but the warehouse remained a focal point of activity from 6 a.m. until 10 p.m. every day from September 20 until it closed October 31.\textsuperscript{18}

The Red Cross was in a delicate situation with respect to the Central Relief Committee, which was made up of Galveston leaders.\textsuperscript{19} The Red Cross was not there to compete with the CRC nor to overtake the existing system of emergency relief; its goal was to work within it. This way the organization hoped to support local leadership and diminish possible criticism of outside interference. Red Cross administrators sent trained personnel accustomed to raising needed funds nationally and to distributing relief goods
promptly. Yet Clara Barton was no ordinary outsider; her influence was far ranging and her methods could be imperious. She intended to see that Galveston leaders listened to her well-intentioned advice, and she was not above manipulating them to accept her ideas. But how to incorporate Red Cross relief efforts with the CRC system of relief presented a bit of a dilemma. Fortunately, the solution for bringing together the Red Cross and the relief committee came from the women of the city.  

As news of the Red Cross work spread, Galvestonians sought ways to join in the volunteer effort. The Galveston Daily News reported that “a number of ladies met yesterday at the headquarters of the Red Cross society ... to assist in the distribution of stores sent through that organization to the Galveston flood sufferers.” They had come to form a Red Cross auxiliary. Under a newly passed congressional provision allowing Red Cross branches to hold auxiliary status, Barton dubbed the new branch Galveston Red Cross Auxiliary No. I. She wrote later in her report, "The ladies of the city, inspite of the shock, grief, and mutilated homes, came grandly to the work of relief, asking to form a Red Cross auxiliary and take charge of the distributing stations in the various wards of the city, under the name of the Red Cross." Barton's humanitarian work and the energy of the Red Cross workers no doubt inspired twenty-six women leaders in Galveston also to become active agents in relief.  

As soon as possible, the Galveston Auxiliary and the Red Cross representatives sought to begin working with the all-important Central Relief Committee. Barton respectfully submitted to the CRC that they take an inventory of the city to determine what needs remained among the people. This prompted a “grand meeting” between Red Cross officials and the members of the CRC and led to the merging of the Red Cross and the local relief committee. Red Cross workers would now serve in an ex-officio capacity on every existing committee. Seeing the wisdom of having the Red Cross fully engaged in relief work, the Central Relief Committee transferred to that organization the entire job of distribution.  

The relief committee (a subcommittee of the CRC), under the leadership of William A. McVitie, had created at 20th Street and the Strand a central commissary and a system of relief stations, one in each of the twelve wards. McVitie had appointed a man in charge of each ward relief station. After the grand meeting turning over relief operations to the Red Cross, the relief committee and the Red Cross “amalgamated” on September 27. Red Cross Auxiliary No. 1 members stepped in as co-chairs in each ward. Not quite sure what to call these women the Galveston Daily News noted that there would now be “a lady chairman in each ward, the gentlemen chairmen of the wards who have been working under the relief committee ...to continue their good work.” Although technically the co-chairs shared the same tasks, the women worked as unpaid volunteers while the men remained on the CRC payroll. Thus the relief committee was able to expand its work without additional expense. At its peak, 50 men and 150 women served in the ward relief stations.  

Just as Clara Barton had instructed, women volunteers went out into their assigned wards and made a census to determine the degree of want. Those supplicants with specific needs, such as a stove, children’s clothing, or bedding, were duly noted and relief goods properly distributed. They distributed food, clothing, and materials for temporary shelters. As enormous quantities of supplies poured into the city, the women volunteers sorted, labeled, and distributed goods until the end of October. Barton had nothing but praise for these volunteers. "The best ladies of the city are heart and hand in them; they are diligently
canvassing the town through all its wards to see personally after the needs of the sufferers."  

More important, these middle-class white women became part of local government, a first in Galveston’s history. Historically, middle-class women, usually members of benevolent societies, had canvassed the wards in order to discern “the worthy poor” and distribute goods for relief. The legacy of working with the poor and ascertaining need was a task that had traditionally been taken up by women under the sponsorship of churches, synagogues, immigrant aid societies, and other volunteer agencies. The women, albeit unpaid, were now working for a local emergency government in tasks that they had formerly done on their own. The most important social change introduced by Clara Barton was the integration of women citizens into the emergency relief structure, thus ensuring their continued participation in city politics. Six months later many of these same women formed the Women’s Health Protective Association, which became the city’s most influential civic organization in the Progressive Era.

The dispatching of relief goods from the ward commissaries brought into bold relief the problems of fair distribution in a city where race relations followed traditional southern patterns. It would be difficult to imagine the disorder, chaos, and confusion that must have reigned in the days immediately after the storm. Witnesses reported seeing bodies lying in streets, draped across cedar trees, floating in the bay, and rotting under piles of shattered houses. Food, water, and cooking implements were scarce; there were few places where the homeless could live; and the city lacked enough policemen to prevent stealing or to oversee the removal of bodies and debris. In the midst of this terrible disaster a corrupting and socially damaging racial stereotyping emerged. Whites believed that blacks would take advantage of the situation to steal – both from the living and the dead -- or would not work unless compelled to do so. First, the newspapers accused blacks of robbing the dead and of cutting off fingers of the victims to steal rings and other jewelry. They called these robbers ghouls, and more often than not identified them as African Americans. On September 12, the Galveston Daily News reported that “Quite a number of negroes were killed for looting” by volunteer deputized patrollers. Rumor had it that as many as forty-five were killed. Anna Focke, writing to relatives, reported that "ears and hands have been cut off the dead, because of ear-rings and rings. Fingers have been found in the pockets of looters, mostly Negros, one of whom had sixteen and another eleven." A herd of journalists descended on the island and reported back to their newspapers falsehoods that nonetheless were read by the nation and by Galvestonians. They raised the number of those shot for looting to seventy-five, again with a racial implications. The usually reliable Chicago Tribune reported falsely that twenty-four “negroes” were shot in the act of stealing from damaged homes and that some militia men were killed in the fray. Harper's Weekly wrote that "hundreds" of salacious types, "many of them negroes, were as diligent in evil work as the rescuers were in good." An especially graphic pen and ink drawing in Paul Lester’s The Great Galveston Disaster (1900, now reprinted) shows a vicious black male stealing a ring from an innocent looking but dead white young woman. One is reminded of southern fears of black men molesting white women, the black rapist myth, and other equally prejudiced designations.

Clarence Ousley, who wrote Galveston in 1900, a factual report of the storm and a corrective to false stories, found that no more than six people were executed for stealing from the dead. Police reports indicate that arrests for looting and disturbing the dead came
to eight, with race unknown. There are no indications of any executions in police records for September and October. But as a result of a Galveston News story that eight negroes had been shot for looting, Governor Joseph Sayers endorsed the city’s decision to call in Adjutant General Thomas Scurry and the Texas militia. The result was imposition of martial law and more discrimination against African Americans by the authorities.  

Also unfair was the widespread assumption held by whites that unless made to do so, blacks would not work. The dreadful task of removing bodies and taking them out to sea for burial fell to fifty blacks who were impressed into service at gunpoint by deputized militia men. The Galveston Daily News reported on September 12, “It was decided to take the bodies to sea,... But men refused to touch the bodies. This was especially true of the negroes... Men were impressed at the point of a bayonet to do the work that must be done.” Evidence to refute the notion that blacks were unwilling to work came immediately after the storm when members of the black Lonestar Cotton Jammers volunteered to clear debris, remove bodies from the sand, and tend to the cremation pyres. Biracial work teams cleared pathways through the rubble and helped in the rebuilding of the wharves and neighborhoods. Rarely did the News praise blacks for their heroism, but in one concession the paper noted, "To the credit of the colored screwmen's organization [shipworkers] let it be said that they followed the splendid example of their white bretheren with gratuitous labor...." Even so, the Chicago Tribune reported that "many of the negroes who handle the bodies fell from fright and nausea. White volunteers took their places and the work went on." African Americans were depicted as infantile, unmanly, or cowardly, while white men were thought to be responsible and full of courage. Galveston Daily News journalists wrote “Grewsome Stories,” and criticized a “colored man,” who was washed out to sea, for “drinking steadily” from a keg of beer while the storm raged. In another instance, an elderly black worker uncovered the body of his son. Sympathy abounded for the father “who cried like a child,” and the work crews offered to bury the boy, but the father declined the offer. The man’s response was treated as weakness, while, conversely, whites were held up as bravely soldiering on despite personal loss.

In any disaster there is often a fear among the distressed that there will not be enough food, water, shelter, or clothing to meet the needs of the sufferers. Commonly, in the South, allotments of goods followed the color line. In the storm’s aftermath, Galveston whites acted predictably, accusing blacks of stepping out of their place, using fraud, and obtaining more than whites thought they were entitled to. As relief goods began arriving whites complained to the Galveston Daily News that the ward relief stations were “overrun with negroes....”

The ward relief committees are having a great deal of difficulty in distributing supplies to the people who require them. The supply depots are overrun with negroes [,] and white women and children have the greatest difficulty in getting anywhere within range of the committees. It is said the negroes go from ward to ward and draw supplies at each depot as being a resident of each ward. Most of the negroes applying are
women, and they inevitably claim that they have no husband, or that they have lost all relatives.  

This accusation led the CRC to call for the impressment of "all idle women found on the streets" in a detention camp, which the News editors labeled “particularly for negroes.” Later News items revealed that the true motives for such a camp stemmed from a severe labor shortage. Black women were wanted as housekeepers and cooks in white households.

"Many families are badly in need of help in the kitchen and household. When colored women are approached and asked if they want to work in many cases they ask exorbitant wages or refuse to work at any price. ...They must either remain in the camp or go to work for private families or the public."

The CRC justified to the public its move to incarcerate “troublesome” black women by claiming that they constituted a belligerent and idle force. Fears that blacks were rebelling against the racial order dictated this authoritarian response, when the actual cause for African American women coming in great numbers to the relief centers may have been dire need and unfair distribution of goods. In a postscript to this sorry affair, the News reported on September 30 that a gift of clothing had come to one of the distribution centers. In typical southern fashion, volunteers distributed the goods to whites in the morning and whatever remained to blacks in the afternoon. This blatantly discriminatory system was intended to remind African Americans of the racial order. Should they try to overturn this system, they might be threatened with imprisonment.

African Americans reacted swiftly by complaining first to their newspapers and later to Clara Barton. The Red Cross served as a neutral sounding board and as an advocate for blacks who suffered doubly -- as aggrieved victims of disaster and discrimination. The Reverend W. A. Campbell came repeatedly to the Red Cross headquarters and finally appealed to Barton in writing. He indicated that he trusted her to find a remedy to this dilemma without causing a public storm.

It is claimed, and, from observation, we hold, with some justice, that the colored people are not being equally dealt with by those who distribute the clothing at the several wards. Very often they are treated with such abruptness, that though in great straights, they do not return. Also the clothing is picked over, and the worst given them.

We therefore suggest, that to stop any further complaint, on the days the clothing is to be issued to colored people, that a colored person of repute be appointed to distribute the same. There are several of the colored teachers who can be had to do this work; and also others who will willingly lend a hand....
That very day, Stephen Barton fired off a letter to Relief Committee Chairman William A. McVitie stating that Campbell had been to see him and was suggesting that "colored teachers could better reach the colored people in the investigation of their wants and worthiness than any others...." He had also asked "that he may be permitted, or appointed, in some way to serve with the Galveston Red Cross ladies in that capacity." Barton concluded his appeal to McVitie by stating that he had promised Campbell that he would "refer the matter" to McVitie for action. Although it is unclear if Campbell’s suggestions were adopted, the Bartons, nonetheless, stepped in as mediators between the black and the white communities.\(^{35}\)

Clara Barton’s compassionate attitude toward African Americans had developed over time through her numerous experiences with disaster relief. The 1893 Hurricane of the Sea Islands off the Coast of South Carolina that took the lives of 5,000 also tested the Red Cross resolve to treat distressed African Americans fairly. Barton witnessed the devastation -- the loss of crops just at harvest time, the marshy flooded terrain still holding water weeks after the August deluge, the spoiled wells, the thirty thousand survivors, many homeless and without clothing, provisions, animals, or even tools for working. She determined to respond to Governor Ben Tillman’s plea for help from the Red Cross. The fact that the majority of survivors were black had created an appalling disinterest on the part of the federal government. The financial panic of 1893 and the fact that South Carolina was a poor state added to her incentive to go. She was warned by locals and by other philanthropists that the Red Cross relief efforts would create a class of dependents because everyone knew that blacks would not work where there were rations given out. So leaving for South Carolina with these admonitions before her, she wrote, "in a dark cheerless September mist, with only two assistants, I closed a door behind me for ten months...."\(^{36}\)

Nothing could prepare her for the hardships of this particular relief effort nor for its rewards. The philanthropic climate in that year of recession was such that the Red Cross could raise only $30,000 for thirty thousand people. It required a plan of action that included the work of the people -- to drill new wells for safe drinking water, dig ditches in order to drain the land and reclaim tillable soil, plant gardens with seeds and seed potatoes from the Red Cross and from their own gardens, and receive a limited supply of goods. For months all the Red Cross could give to those on islands all up and down the coast was “one peck of grits and one pound of pork to a family of seven for one week....” The survivors rebuilt their own houses, barns, fences, pens with lumber donated to the Red Cross and with tools borrowed and returned; they sewed and repaired clothing sent to them, and they fished in the waters off the islands for food. The experience of working with the Sea Islanders for ten months proved the critics wrong, and after the survivors were sufficiently recovered to resume their livelihoods, they contributed in 1900 to the victims of the Galveston disaster.\(^{37}\)

So with these gifts and with this experience Clara Barton found other ways to sidestep the possibility of discrimination in Galveston. Barton, in a kind but patronizing manner, invited John R. Gibson, principal of Central High School, and several of the teachers to form a "[Red Cross] society with all proper officers, seal, etc., and fit themselves to receive a little money." Heeding the call for aid, African Americans from Beaufort, Port Royal, and Charleston, South Carolina, who themselves had been the recipients of Red Cross aid in the Sea Islands Hurricane of 1893, sent over $400 in relief
money to Galveston blacks. They were joined by African Americans from Thibodeaux, Louisiana, and from Alexandria, Virginia. Barton created a little ceremony for giving this donation to Gibson and his Red Cross volunteers, which later numbered twenty-six. She reported that they should carefully plan how to use this money and that it should be considered “seed” money for some worthy goal. The fact that she gave them money outright was unusual, for the Red Cross customarily gave goods in kind to disaster survivors. That she handed over money to African Americans in Galveston instead of goods, showed the level of trust she placed in their capacity to use it appropriately. Aware of the social forces stacked against them she opined, "the moment seemed sacred when these poor, dark figures struggling toward the light walked out of my presence." The African American Red Cross society saved most of the money to start a "Home for Indigent Colored People" because nothing beyond the county poor farm existed for their care. The rest of the funds they used to distribute 335 Bibles and books for school children. By handing the money directly to Gibson, Barton also avoided dealing with the all-white Central Relief Committee, which may not have given it directly to its intended recipients. She also prevented open disagreement with city officials while working directly with representatives of the African American community. In placing donations directly into the hands of Gibson and the African American Red Cross Society, Barton made it possible for Galveston blacks to determine for themselves how they should use the money and for whom.  

It should be noted that the Bartons handled issues involving race relations carefully, trying not to offend African Americans or white city officials. But in the matter of the homeless, which numbered between eight and ten thousand, Clara Barton became an outspoken opponent of CRC policy. Using all of her powers of persuasion, Barton changed the direction of the Central Relief Committee away from temporary shelters toward the construction of permanent housing for the homeless.  

Families who had lost their homes coped as best they could in the days after the storm. Some scavenged storm lumber from debris piles on the island and built their own storm lumber houses, rude temporary dwellings without windows and only a single door. Many stayed in their damaged homes, hoping for some kind of aid. The Building Committee reported that “a very large number were living in roofless houses amidst debris that covered decomposed bodies, and over which they were obliged to climb in order to reach the remnants of their homes.” Others took to camping on their own land in one of the thousand tents sent compliments of the U.S. Army, mostly Spanish American War or even Civil War relics. For migrant workers who came to help rebuild the city, and for those without housing or land, a “White City on the Beach” appeared as a temporary compound of several hundred tents. Residents of this camp built floors and furnished their tents with wood and furniture found in the great debris piles. The “city” boasted a hospital tent, kitchen tents, and a dining room; meals were prepared under the supervision of Galveston’s beloved Rabbi Cohen of Temple B’nai Israel. To some observers, tent life looked inviting. The Daily News called it “the most healthful and in the best sanitary condition of any place on the island. It is situated south of the foul smelling debris and is exposed to the purifying elements of the salt south breeze.” Advertised as if it were a health resort, the News spoke of vacancies and predicted that it would grow rapidly. This brought an immediate rebuke from Clara Barton, who foresaw winter closing in on the homeless.
By late September the problem of shelter had become a constant worry to Clara Barton. Not one to keep her thoughts to herself, she wrote to her supporters and followers to begin sending money to her for building materials. "The hungry, the ragged, and the orphaned were now cared for," she wrote, "but there are 8,000 homeless people. Where shall these wretched people go? ...Many owned their homes; but for miles and miles along the coast even the ground is gone and the restless tide ebbs and flows over what was all to them....?" By September 30, she could wait no longer for the CRC to act; she therefore dashed off a letter to the Chairman of the building committee, Bertrand Adoue, "(published in the News October 2) "urging the importance of the immediate adoption of some fixed plan of action by yourselves, so that a definite statement can be made to the American people of your wants in this most important direction." She continued, "I believe a computation should be made showing the maximum estimated number of homeless people, including those who are now within the city and those who have sought shelter and asylum outside and who would return if any accommodations [were] offered...." Let the American people know how many houses, no matter how modest, the building committee planned to provide, she lectured. "Our experience teaches us that it is only necessary to inform the public in a business-like way the exact needs ... and the efforts will at once be earnestly directed in such channels." She further counseled the city officials to have the architects plan to rebuild "in a definite and comprehensive way."

This may well have been the first time city leaders took directives from a woman who not only held national prominence but who also was beloved for her humanitarian good works. Who could oppose the indomitable Clara Barton? While she admonished them to enumerate their people's needs more efficiently, she also urged a comprehensive course for city planning. Such forceful recommendations may have taken the committeemen by surprise, but they could hardly contradict such a commanding female presence. Her own moral authority and national reputation held great weight, and future women activists in Galveston took note.

The Building Committee, under the leadership of Bertrand Adoue, did as instructed; it made an accounting of the numbers of homeless. Barton then sent out her appeal to the "Manufacturers of and Dealers in, Lumber, Hardware, Builders Materials and Household Goods and to the Business Men in General of the United States." The appeal was a list of specific needs for lumber, bricks, doorframes, hinges, roofing, and household furnishings. Wanting to be seen as cooperative with city leaders, she, nonetheless, thought they had not yet grasped the importance of providing for the homeless. Red Cross principles included not only immediate relief to stem want and suffering but also long-term rehabilitation plans so that the organization could leave an area knowing that the people had made enough material gain to survive and go forward. In a letter to her friend, William Howard, she opined, "I believe so far in the good heartedness of the people and the good sense of its business men as to think they will in measure adopt and conform to the plans we have given." By October 11, the Shreveport Times announced that lumber mills in that state were ready to send shipments. Barton then prepared a letter of introduction for building committee member and wealthy capitalist Morris Lasker. He departed for New York to raise money for the new homes. Meanwhile a newly formed Red Cross Auxiliary No. 3, made up of women from Texas living in Washington D.C., held a giant fundraiser netting $1700 for the building of new homes.
When news of the city’s commitment to help rebuild houses reached the citizens, five thousand Galvestonians applied for assistance. Although the Galveston City Council had suggested constructing “large barracks on the streets, vacant lots, and in City Parks,” the CRC decided, “for reasons both moral and physical” to follow Barton's plan for erecting individual homes. It spent $450,000 on repairing damaged houses and building new ones. (This did not include the donations sent by Clara Barton's appeal to the building industry.) After appointing four inspectors to evaluate each applicant’s need, the committee determined how much the repairs or the replacement would cost. The result was that “small amounts of money were allowed for making partial repairs, and contracts were made for building three-room cottages … on lots belonging to families whose residences had been entirely destroyed.” Four hundred and eighty-three houses were built, each one costing between $300 and $350. Galvestonians called these three rooms-in-a-row wooden houses with clapboard siding "commissary" houses, probably because they were issued in a manner similar to relief goods from the ward commissaries. Barton’s cajoling, urging, and even interference resulted in decisions by the CRC in favor of low-cost individual housing. And, to the building committee’s credit, “no distinction was made between the races.” These houses added nothing to the aesthetics of the island (and many are still there today), but Barton’s insistence on creating suitable housing for the estimated 8,000 homeless had the advantage of putting families back on their own land and providing much needed shelter after the storm.

By October 25, the city’s relief efforts were winding down. The ward relief stations had supplied provisions to fifteen thousand people between September 10 and 22. Some families, unable to recover sufficiently continued to receive aid from the relief committee until January. But the ward relief stations closed on October 25, followed several days later by the Red Cross warehouse. Seeing the need to help farmers on the mainland, the Red Cross workers packed up four car loads of remaining items from their stores and shipped them to Houston. The Red Cross orphanage was disassembled and the orphans were settled in new homes. Having witnessed the distress of mainland farmers, Barton ordered seed, fertilizers, grain for animals, provisions, and a million and a half strawberry plants from North Carolina, Illinois, Arkansas, and Louisiana. These she distributed to farmers whose crops would be ready for quick sale in early spring. Thus ensuring that the hardworking were only a season away from a cash producing crop, she departed Texas on November 15, 1900.

In her diary she wrote that she returned to her home in Glen Echo, Maryland, and “found a warm house [,] and all retired to a needed rest after a good supper. I went to my bed and there remained for nearly a month…. The work of relief in Galveston had been exhausting, and her diary shows that she wanted to see very few people after her strenuous effort. But a reward for her hard work came in March, when the farmers of Texas sent her a basket of ripened strawberries. By that time Galveston was well on its way to recovery, and Barton had proved that she was capable of one last field experience.

Barton may well have proved to the board of control that she was a resilient president, willing to risk her health for the sake of others. Grateful Galvestonians presented her with a resolution of thanks that she proudly displayed. She was praised by the governor of Texas; her presence, he said, had “served to inspire our people with energy, self-confidence and self-determination.” But she could not win her battle to
control the administration of the organization that she had brought to life in this country. After the Galveston relief effort, her critics took issue with her over her accounting methods, and the board of control scrutinized the financial records, which they complained were loosely organized and included questionable expenditures. A formidable force was beginning to array against her, and retirement in 1904 at age 82 was the inevitable result.

The importance of Clara Barton’s last field relief effort cannot be underestimated, however. Clara Barton and the Red Cross enticed much needed national aid to the island city. Because Barton had insisted on women’s participation in the ward commissaries, white women were granted unprecedented authority in the day-to-day relief operations. Their first official positions within the emergency relief operations came as a result of Barton’s involvement in the post-storm recovery. Their experience gained during this period evolved into a permanent political presence, the Women’s Health Protective Association (WHPA), which became the premier women’s civic and political organization in the city. Among its many projects would be the overseeing of decent burial for victims’ remains discovered long after the clean-up crews had retired. The women took it upon themselves to restore vegetation to the island after the storm and subsequent grade raising. This later action accompanied the construction of a seventeen-foot-high sea wall, a permanent barrier along the island’s rim against future storms. The grade raising, a remarkable engineering feat at the turn of the century, elevated the island to the height of the wall and gradually sloped the ground toward the bay. Structures on the island were raised on giant jacks, and sand dredged from the bay filled in the space beneath the “city on stilts.” The process denuded the island until members of the WHPA brought in and planted oak and palm trees, oleanders, and rose bushes. By 1913, the WHPA took to campaigning for public health improvements, particularly the sanitary condition of the city’s milk. Although outside the bounds of official office holders, the WHPA was a forceful interest group that had the power to change public policy. Barton’s endorsement of women’s activism, even including the right for women to vote, influenced the creation of this important organization in a southern city.

Also, during the island’s recovery, black relief workers and black survivors, who suffered discrimination at the hands of white volunteers, were aided by Barton and the Red Cross. In these cases, the Bartons wrote letters of protest on their behalf and established an independent charitable black Red Cross society (auxiliary) free of white interference. She administered relief directly from African American donors, some from past rescue operations, to Galveston African Americans. Finally, in her most persuasive mode, Barton insisted that city officials construct individual houses for the eight to ten thousand left homeless by the storm and headed up a campaign among builders for the donation of construction materials. The result was a markedly changed architectural environment as Galvestonians adjusted to small wooden “commissary houses.”

The 1900 storm’s effect on the population of Galveston included not only enormous environmental changes but also long-lasting social alterations. Political advances for white women continued through the decade, while, unfortunately, black male political power declined. Although Barton ultimately could not change the advance of segregation in Galveston, she, nonetheless, endorsed a pattern of respect and of self-determination for African Americans. There is no doubt that her presence and that of the
Red Cross shaped public policy and created a form of social engineering that endured beyond the weeks of her sojourn there.
Endnotes


4 Pryor, Professional Angel, 327.


7 Ousley, Galveston in Nineteen Hundred, 47-52, 95-125; John Edward Weems, A Weekend in September (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1957), 158.
The New York World offered to provide a palace-car for transportation to Galveston and promised to give any monies collected for the relief of storm sufferers to the Red Cross. This came to nearly $2,000. Clara Barton, “Report of Clara Barton, President of the American National Red Cross,” in Report of Red Cross Relief at Galveston (n.d. [c. December 1900] Clara Barton Papers), 4.


Barton wrote in her diary that Mrs. Mussey “objected to my going. To this singular protest I made no remonstrance, but went with no thought of its having any importance. … I had contracted …a little contagious attack of gripe[,] which developed on the way, and gave me a slight fever. This seemed to alarm Mrs. Mussey who insisted on calling a physician Dr. Mercer - - and it developed between them that I must leave at once for home. Accordingly[,] while I slept an arrangement was made with a cutter to take me next morning to Houston -- with four of our assistants, take me on board a train, and carry me home to Washington. On waking next morning I was informed of the arrangement and that Mrs. Mussey and the Doctor were there to dress and get me ready for the waiting cutter…. Needless to say that the journey was not made.” Clara Barton Diary, December 12, 1900. Barton defended her presence in Galveston to friends and to the press in part to stave off criticism of her abilities to lead the organization and in part because she felt it was her humanitarian duty to be at the site of the disaster. Incensed that Mussey would presume to send her home, she insisted that she “was quite well, in three or four days and have been able to conduct my part of the work without interruption.” Clara Barton to Alexander W. Terrill, October 5, 1900, (Clara Barton Papers). See also Pryor, Clara Barton: Professional Angel, 328-29; and Blanche Colton Williams, Clara Barton: Daughter of Destiny (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Co., 1941), 380. According to Williams, Mussey left on September 22. Stephen Barton took on the tasks of general manager under his aunt’s supervision. Stephen E. Barton to William W. Howard, September 19, 1900 (Clara Barton Papers).

Red Cross, “Report of Clara Barton, President of the American National Red Cross,” in Report of Red Cross Relief, 5.
To the Woman's Relief Association of Algiers, Louisiana, she wired "Need immediately sheets, pillow cases and necessary bedding for one hundred cots for Orphans Home." Clara Barton to Miss J. Barclay, September 19, 1900 (Clara Barton Papers). She directed dispatchers in New York City to take all donations for the Red Cross straight away to the Mallory Line for shipment to Galveston. Clara Barton to I. P. Roosa, September 19, 1900 (Clara Barton Papers). She sent appeals for money to the National Commander of the Grand Army of the Republic and to the Woman's Relief Corps. Clara Barton to General Leo Ressieur; Clara Barton to Mrs. Carr, September 18, 1900 (Clara Barton Papers).

In September, too much heavy winter clothing had arrived, and she pleaded for money donations to buy from the local merchants (at sacrifice prices) articles that were needed, thus "in that way minister to the wants of the suffering and encourage the merchants whose trade is stagnated by the overwhelming disaster." Clara Barton to Rev. G. G. Howes, Sept. 23, 1900 (Clara Barton Papers). She and Stephen Barton declared in nearly every letter they wrote responding to questions about aid that for the work of buying goods and medicines from local merchants, and for the work of relief "nothing is so much needed as money forwarded or telegraphed to the National Red Cross at once." Clara Barton to William W. Howard, September 18, 1900 (Clara Barton Papers). "The great relief must come in the form of many millions of dollars, ... which must be poured in to partially reinstate those whose dwellings and contents have been absolutely annihilated to the number of many thousands." Stephen Barton to F. Flather, September 19, 1900 (Clara Barton Papers). By mid October, after the first of several rains had descended upon the island, she sent word that heavy clothing was now needed again to prepare the homeless for winter. Clara Barton to Mrs. E. A. Robinson, October 10, 1900; Clara Barton Clara Barton to Dr. J. Wilkes O’Neill, September 19, 1900 (Clara Barton Papers).

Mrs. Miriam D. Livingston to Clara Barton, October 1, 1900; Clara Barton to Cambria Steel Company, September 25, 1900 (Clara Barton Papers).

General Correspondence to Clara Barton in Galveston September 17 to October 31, 1900 (Clara Barton Papers). Red Cross, “Report of Clara Barton, President of the American National Red Cross,” in Report of Red Cross Relief, 71-77. The Red Cross turned the disinfectants over to the Central Relief Committee.Clara Barton to Dr. J. Wilkes O’Neill, September 19, 1900; Stephen Barton to Fred Ward, September 23, 1900 (Clara Barton Papers).

General Correspondence to Clara Barton in Galveston September 17 to October 31, 1900 (Clara Barton Papers). Red Cross, “Report of Clara Barton, President of the American National Red Cross,” in Report of Red Cross Relief, 7, 71-77. Ross, Angel of the Battlefield, 229.

Stephen Barton to Ray B. March, September 26, 1900 (Clara Barton Papers). The
plight of orphans and of children orphaned by the storm captured the hearts of donors outside the state. Clara Barton and the Red Cross had come expecting to find hundreds of orphans wandering the streets in need of a home. After her arrival, Stephen Barton informed the mayor of Houston that the Red Cross had opened a temporary home "to receive and care for all of the orphans or destitute children, consequent upon the recent storm...." and he implored the mayor to help supply information as to how many children were in need and where they might be found. Acknowledging that many of the orphans had already been removed to Houston or elsewhere, there was nonetheless a place for the remainder fitted up for them in the Red Cross warehouse. Stephen Barton to the Mayor of Houston, September 22, 1900 (Clara Barton Papers). By October about twenty-one children occupied the entire second floor of the warehouse, their "lodgings" furnished with usable items from the damaged Galveston Orphans' Home. According to Clara Barton, they were taught by a kindergarten teacher who was "with them each day singing cheerily at their meals...." Clara Barton to Mrs. M.M. P. Root, October 14, 1900; Stephen Barton to B. H. Warner, September 20, 1900; Stephen Barton to William J. Flather, September 20, 1900 (Clara Barton Papers). When the Red Cross finished its mission in Galveston, it found homes for the children who had come to live in the warehouse.

19 Members of the Central Relief Committee included Walter C. Jones, mayor and chairman; William A. McVitie, ship agent and chairman of Relief Committee; John Sealy, banker and chairman of the Finance Committee; R. V. Davidson, state senator and CRC secretary; Isaac H. Kempner, financier and member of the Finance Committee; Noah Allen, city recorder and chairman of the Relief Labor Bureau; Daniel Ripley, ship agent, chairman of the Hospital Committee and chairman of the Transportation Committee; Ben Levy, alderman and chairman of the Burial Committee; Jens Moller, ship agent, member of the Finance Committee and chairman of the Labor Committee; Bertrand Adoue, banker, member of the Finance Committee and chairman of the Building Committee; Williiam V. McConn, labor Journal editor and member of the Building Committee; Reverend Henry Cohen, rabbi of Temple B’nai Israel and member of the Hospital Committee; Morris Lasker, businessman and chairman of the Correspondence Committee and member of the Building Committee. Clara Barton, Stephen E. Barton, and Dr. George Soper, sanitation expert from New York City were given honorary status on the CRC. A Miss Williams served as official stenographer.

20 Based on previous experiences with flood victims, Red Cross workers knew that the greatest problems stemmed from property losses, public health, and sanitation. In the first stage of its mission -- the period of emergency relief -- Red Cross workers did their best immediately to provide food, clothing, and household furnishings. Knowing that the organization could never entirely replace lost property, it ministered to families, as "the unit of treatment," and proportioned goods according to need rather than according to losses endured. Once families
had been helped over the initial shock and had received enough to sustain them, the next stage -- the period of rehabilitation -- began. "Rehabilitation plans and acts for ultimate welfare," hence each family's particular needs were ascertained to return it to normal life. J. Byron Deacon, *Disasters and the American Red Cross in Disaster Relief* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1918), 12, 83, 91, 167-69.


23 The ward leaders were: Annie B. Hill, Mollie Settle, Margaret Griffin, Ella Goldthwaite, Lucy Quarel, Mrs. J. W. Keenan, Mrs. Forster Rose, Lucy Ballinger Mills, Mary E. Reading, Iola Barns Beers, and Lucy Gregory. Later Ellen Kenison, Mary J. Scrimgeour, and Mrs. J. H. Miller, who replaced some of the women who fell ill. *Galveston Daily News*, September 28, 30, 1900.

24 W. A. McVitie, chairman of the Relief Committee, wanted the women to "predominate," because, he stated, they could "do this work better than the men." *Galveston Daily News*, September 28, 29, 1900. Clara Barton to E. W. Whitaker, October 6, 1900 (Clara Barton Papers).


26 Volunteers from the Screwmen's Benevolent Association, who were patrolling the streets, were instructed to "protect the negroes from robbing the dead," indicating that whites were expecting blacks to steal. Letters from survivors to those outside the city show that they identified stealing with race; Louisa Rollfing blamed "niggers" for taking part of her husband's clothes from a trunk their neighbors recovered. *Galveston Daily News*, September 12, 1900; Louisa
Christine Rollfing autobiography, typescript (Rosenberg Library, Galveston);
"September Eighth 1900: An Account of that Day by a Mother to her Daughters Far Away," J. Focke Papers (Rosenberg Library, Galveston). Journalist Nathan C. Green included the following statements in his book under a heading "No Americans Among the Ghouls": "The best men!" said the marshal. "They've left their own misery and come down here to do police duty. We needed them. They had to shoot twenty-five men yesterday for looting the dead. Not Americans, not one of them. I saw them all -- negroes.... They cut off the hands of their victims." Story of the Galveston Flood: Complete, Graphic, Authentic (Baltimore: R. H. Woodward Co., 1900), 88, 91. Henry W. Wolfram to Dear George, September 21, 1900, Henry M. Wolfram Letter (Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin). Sensational accounts of the hurricane include Paul Lester, The Great Galveston Disaster (Gretna: Pelican Publishing Company, repr. 2000), photo between pp. 160 and 161; Paul Lester, The True Story of the Galveston Flood As Told by the Survivors (Philadelphia: American Book and Bible House, 1900), 256; John Coulter, ed. The Complete Story of the Galveston Horror, Written by the Survivors (United Publishers of America, 1900); Nathan C. Greene, ed. Story of the Galveston Flood: Complete, Graphic, Authentic (Baltimore: R. H. Woodward Co., 1900), 88, 91, 96-97; and Murat Halstead, Galveston: The Horrors of a Stricken City (Chicago, 1900). A superb discussion of the myth of the black rapist may be found in Glenda Elizabeth Gilmore, Gender and Jim Crow: Women and Politics of White Supremacy in North Carolina, 1896-1920 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), Chap. 3.


28 Galveston Daily News, September 12, 1900.

29 Galveston Daily News, September 12, 14, 16, 1900; Ousley, Galveston in Nineteen, 90-91, 110; [Galveston] City Times, September 29, 1900(last quotation), November 21, 1908.

30 Galveston Daily News, September 14, 1900.

31 The CRC suggested that all destitute women should be fed in the camp and detained there so as to "prevent the practice of fraud by people in drawing rations. ...Where women state they have no male members of their family they will be sent to the camp and kept there until they are willing to work at regular wages for private parties or the public." Galveston Daily News, September 14, 17, 18, 1900. It is unlikely that any women were detained or impressed. The papers do not mention it again, and martial law was lifted on September 21. For an analysis of a parallel situation of disorderly conduct among women during the Civil War see Victoria E. Bynum, Unruly Women: The Politics of Social and Sexual...


33 Working without leaders representing them at the highest levels, however, rankled as seen in this angry letter posted in the black-owned Galveston City Times, September 29, 1900.

The colored man is good enough to save the lives of the little white babes, white women and even men. Good enough to visit the sick, bury the dead, care for the helpless, and render noble assistance in every particular... and yet in all of that he has not been good enough to even be represented as a committeeman. He has lost everything he had and in two wards he was entitled to a committeeman.

34 Rev. Campbell spoke also of the nature of the second-hand clothing distributed. "Many of them now being issued are unfit for wear. The man who opens the boxes in the Seventh ward stated to us that some of these were decidedly offensive. The question is shall we run the risk of generating the germs of disease, in this hot weather; and, subject ourselves to small pox, or some such pest that arises from just such uncleanness. These things are often given to the very poorest the worst class, into whose hands they can fall. For filth is then likely to be added to filth." He added a list of names of those who could help with the distribution and suggested that a problem also existed with food distribution since "many worthy old people have complained of being turned off for unnecessary reasons." W. A. Campbell to Clara Barton, October 8, 1900 (Clara Barton Papers).

35 On the matter of infected clothing, Clara Barton wrote to suppliers -- delicately -- not to take any chances with the victims by sending adulterated goods, and implying that if there were an outbreak of diphtheria, they would all fear that perhaps diseased clothing had been the cause of it. Stephen Barton to W. A. McVitie, October 8, 1900; Clara Barton to Mrs. Graham, October 10, 1900 (Clara Barton Papers).

36 Barton, The Red Cross: A History of This Remarkable International Movement, 201; Pryor, Professional Angel, 275-79.

37 Barton, The Red Cross: A History of This Remarkable International Movement, 225, 205-73; Pryor, Professional Angel, 276-79.

38 A. C. Kaufman to Clara Barton, September 21, October 9, 1900; Clara Barton to Miss Jessie Jackson, September 29, 1900; Record of Morning Work, October 18, 1900; Clara Barton to Rev. F. J. Belt, October 24, 1900; news clipping from
the Charleston News and Courier, no date; Stephen Barton to A. C. Kauffman [sic], November 12, 1900; Clara Barton to J. R. Gibson, December 6, 1900 (Clara Barton Papers). Red Cross, Report of Clara Barton, President of the American National Red Cross,” in Report of Red Cross Relief, 10-11.


41 Galveston Daily News, October 1, 2, 1900. Clara Barton to William Howard, September 27, 1900; Clara Barton to Bertrand Adoue, September 30, 1900 (Clara Barton Papers). The miles of debris, splintered and water damaged, were of little use to the building of new homes and would have to be burned or carted away to the mainland.

42 If the male leaders of Galveston resented hearing directives from a woman, they made no public complaint. And if Barton felt that they were neglectful of the needs of the homeless, she made no public acknowledgment either. In a letter to President William McKinley, she praised the Galveston leaders, who were "destroyed in business, crippled in finances, but on whom must fall the great final burden of relief. My respect for these men increases with every day's meetings. I have never seen such unanimity of action. No discord, nor self-thought, but one settled, united purpose…" Then she let President McKinley know that restoring shelter was the great pressing need. She demurely noted that the "perplexed Committee has called us into consultation." Clara Barton to President William McKinley, October 1, 1900 (Clara Barton Papers).

43 Clara Barton to Colonel Pruden, October 2, 1900; Clara Barton to William Williard Howard, October 6, 1900; Clara Barton and Stephen Barton, “To the Manufacturers of, and Dealers in, Lumber, Hardware, Building Materials and Household Goods, and to the Business men in General of the United States,” October 6, 1900; C. Scott DeLay of the Shreveport Times to Clara Barton, October 11, 1900; Clara Barton to George C. Boldt, October 13, 1900 (Clara Barton Papers). With the endorsement of Congressman R. B. Hawley from Galveston, Red Cross Auxiliary No. 3 held a fundraiser in the largest theater in

23
the city with prominent speakers and a Marine band. Ellen Mussey to Clara Barton, October 3, 5, 8, 13, 15, 1900 (Clara Barton Papers).

44 For those owners who were willing to donate their labor or supplies the committee spent about $265 per owner rebuilding some 1,100 homes. Owners needing repairs -- approximately 1,114 -- received cash payments of between $16 and $359. Report of the Central Relief Committee for Galveston Storm Sufferers, Galveston, 9-10; Beasley, The Alleys and Back Buildings of Galveston, 70-71.

45 Report of the Central Relief Committee for Galveston Storm Sufferers, 5-6; Pryor, Clara Barton: Professional Angel, 329; Red Cross, “Report of Clara Barton, President of the American National Red Cross,” in Report of Red Cross Relief, 21-22; Clara Barton Diary, December 12, 1900 (Clara Barton Papers).

46 Clara Barton Diary, December 12, 1900 (Clara Barton Papers). Pryor, Professional Angel, 329; Williams, Clara Barton, 380-81.

47 Pryor, Professional Angel, 330-55.

48 “Clara Barton for Woman Suffrage,” The Woman’s Journal, 7, No. 2 (March 1898), 1-2. On the Women’s Health Protective Association of Galveston see Turner, Women, Culture, and Community, Chap. 7. On the sea wall construction and grade raising see Bixel and Turner, Galveston and the 1900 Storm, Chap. 3.