
Franklin D. Roosevelt — “The Great Communicator”
The Master Speech Files, 1898, 1910-1945

Series 1: Franklin D. Roosevelt’s Political Ascension

File No. 439

1931 September 9

**Dansville, NY - 50th Anniversary of 1st Red
Cross Chapter in United States**

At Fiftieth Anniversary of Founding of First Red Cross Chapter
in America by Clara Barton, Dansville, N. Y., September 9, 1931

Clara Barton

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Clara Barton was more than the "Angel of the Battlefield." Her fearlessness on the fields of combat of the Civil War, her work for suffering humanity place her among the heroines of America.

Clara Barton represents to mankind more than the Founder of a great society with a membership of millions of men and women throughout the land. For that work, begun here at Dansville fifty years ago, she will always rank as a leader in American public service.

Clara Barton did more than this for humanity because it was her conception that the American Red Cross should function as a permanent and prepared instrument to combat human suffering and human need in times of peace, as well as in times of war, that opened a new ideal of citizenship and government to this nation.

The State of New York takes pride in her noble womanhood and joins with the President of the United States in a national recognition of her great service. Monuments of stone, tablets of bronze will rise to her memory but I think I speak for the people of this State when I say that the best and highest tribute which we can pay to her will rest in a deep understanding among all elements of our population, that no modern social order can rest secure without recognition of the duty of the community at all times to care for those of its members who suffer or are in want.

The evolution of this thought is not of ancient origin. The day is not long passed when great disasters to mankind were looked upon as an Act of God, a retribution in some mysterious way visited upon us for the sins of man. First, in the dawning light of our present day civilization, came the realization that human catastrophe called for helping human hands. In this task the American Red Cross, throughout its earlier years, taught us a lesson of practical aid, sustained by an understanding heart.

In these present days this great objective, first outlined by Clara Barton, has been broadened to an equally logical but even greater purpose. We understand today that disaster and catastrophe are not limited to suffering caused by fire and flood and famine.

We know now that human suffering can arise from causes created, not by the elements or by the failure of our crops, but rather by causes brought into being by a lack of understanding or worse, in regard to the social and financial economics of a nation or of the family of nations.

If the teachings of Florence Nightingale on the fields of the Crimea were right; if the teachings of Clara Barton in the great distress of earthquake and of flood were right, it is equally true that these same teachings, based on the duty of the community and of the State, must apply with equal right to the distress and suffering which stalk in our midst on this anniversary day.

To this high aim, following in her footsteps, we must devote our every resource. To this high aim we dedicate ourselves as individual men and women and children. To this high aim we dedicate our community life in all its relationships with each other. To this high aim we dedicate our functions of government, our towns, our counties and our State.