



Clarissa Harlowe Barton

December 25, 1821 - April 12, 1912

Oxford, Massachusetts

Clarissa Harlowe Barton, known as Clara Barton, died at Glen Echo, Maryland, on April 12, 1912, in the house that had doubled as Red Cross headquarters. She was ninety. Born in Oxford, Massachusetts, on December 25, 1821, she taught school, clerked in the Patent Office when few women did, and during the Civil War organized supplies and nursing at the edge of battles that official channels had already declared someone else's problem.

After the war she ran a missing-soldiers office that answered families the Army had filed as closed. She brought the Red Cross to the United States and led it through the Johnstown flood, the Sea Islands hurricane, and the Spanish-American War, a field director rather than a figurehead. She left the organization after a fight over how a charity should be governed - whether it was a founder's instrument or a board's. She was not gentle about being managed.

This memorial names Oxford, her beginning. Glen Echo was the last house, now a National Park Service site on the Potomac trolley line. She is buried in North Cemetery in Oxford, among the New England stones, not on the Maryland riverbank where the work ended. The missing-soldiers files are the quieter monument.

She learned French enough to deal with Geneva and stubbornness enough to deal with Congress. The Red Cross charter she wanted was a battlefield instrument, not a parlor. Oxford's cemetery is a New England ending for a woman who had slept in wagons. Glen Echo keeps the desk. The missing-soldiers letters keep the names.

Services

Died in Glen Echo, Maryland, on April 12, 1912. Interment at North Cemetery, Oxford, Massachusetts.

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