

Lesson One, Breaking Boundaries: Activity#3.
The First Aid Kit
“Clara Barton and her Work with the National First-Aid Association”

In 1903, Clara Barton published the following statement:

We are actively organizing a new branch of the Red Cross, to be known as ‘The First Aid Department’ of the American National Red Cross, which department will be largely educational and will concern itself in instructing the people everywhere throughout the United States in the best modern methods of first aid treatment, in all cases of accident and emergency.

Miss Barton outlined this pioneer program for the American Red Cross as consisting of two branches. The first would develop first aid kits, or “Emergency Cases.” As she said:

There will be two distinct branches of this work. For the first an emergency case, similar to that in use in England, Germany, and other Red Cross Treaty Nations, and this has been adapted to Red Cross needs and methods under the direct supervision of the Medical Board of the Red Cross Hospital. It contains material and surgical dressings of the best class known to modern surgery. A most valuable part of the permanent equipment of this emergency case is a series of emergency charts, arranged for instantaneous reference, giving simple brief instructions for dealing with every conceivable case of accident, pending the arrival of the doctor. This chart is the combined work of a committee of eminent physicians and surgeons; and, apart from [KIM: I AM GUESSING THIS IS A SPELLING ERROR?](#) the admirable manner of its arrangement, may be regarded as the highest standard of authority upon first aid methods of treatment known to the world.

The other branch of the department will undertake the formation of first aid emergency classes in every city in the country. Ambulance corps will be formed among the employees of mills and factories, industrial corporations, railroad employees, the police, and employees of public departments. These employees will be drilled and instructed in first aid methods, and, apart from the value of the knowledge they will obtain for local use and service, they will form an efficient force to draw from as helpers in great national calamities.

During 1903, the earliest American Red Cross Emergency Cases were produced and Miss Barton’s vision of teaching emergency response and first aid for the injured was taking shape. Instructors and training classes were organized. But, the organization was fractured from years of internal power struggles and, on May 14, 1904, Clara Barton resigned as president of the American Red Cross. The American Red Cross, first under temporary leadership and later struggling with its reorganization and the complications of the San Francisco Earthquake and fire of 1906, had abandoned the idea.

In 1905, Clara Barton published the following statement: “This announcement will not surprise you. You have never known me without work; while able, you never will. It has always been a part of the best religion I had.” She organized The National First Aid Association of America and accepted the position of honorary president.

The concepts of The National First Aid Association of America were based on what she had tried to organize with the Department of First Aid program within the American Red Cross. Miss Barton explained that “the work of the association will be along the same lines as those followed by the Red Cross Society, except that it will deal with smaller rather than the great calamities of life.”