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Marian Moser Jones. *The American Red Cross from Clara Barton to the New Deal.* Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013. 404 pp. $39.95 (cloth), ISBN 978-1-4214-0738-8.

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Continuity and Change: The Transforming American Red Cross and the Dynamics of Humanitarianism

Although the place of the American Red Cross is assured today in American society, its reputation, legitimacy, and capacity for administering disaster relief were not always certain. This is the major thrust of Marian Moser Jones's new book that chronicles the transformation of an essential American institution from its infancy in the mid-nineteenth century to the present. *The American Red Cross from Clara Barton to the New Deal* examines a far wider swath of American history than its title suggests, as it substantially explores the Red Cross's activities beyond the 1930s. The timeliness of its publication could not be more fortunate because of its concurrent release with Julia Irwin's *Making the World Safe: The American Red Cross and a Nation's Humanitarian Awakening* (2013). These two volumes attest that a Red Cross scholarly renaissance is underway that is directing new attention to an organization that has escaped serious scrutiny by historians since Foster Rhea Dulles crafted *The American Red Cross: A History* in 1950.

Now, 60 years after Dulles's monograph and 150 years since Clara Barton's medical ministrations during the Civil War opened new vistas in American aid, historians are probing the contours of humanitarianism. Scholars are investigating its ideational impact on social welfare policies, its diplomatic and practical complexities, and its striking relevance for modern audiences concerned with humanitarian assistance and disaster relief today. Additional studies will be aided greatly, moreover, by the recent consolidation of many Red Cross materials at the National Archives in College Park, Maryland, having been formerly divided between the National Archives and an administrative annex in northern Virginia.

In its early years, the Red Cross was indistinguishable from Barton, the matriarchal force who breathed life into the institution. Barton's humanitarian awakening that inspired her association with the Red Cross occurred during the American Civil War and her postwar convalescence in Switzerland where she interacted with the organizers of the first Geneva Convention and participated in Franco-Prussian War relief initiatives. Jones perceptively locates Barton's Red Cross as a Reconstruction era undertaking that fostered national reconciliation by transcending sectional concerns that had divided the nation since its founding and had just rent the nation in war. Barton's conceptualization of the Red Cross as an *American* project further suggests that the organization may have aided in the new nationalism en vogue in the industrializing world. Jones's book thus injects the Red Cross into the lines of inquiry pursued by David W. Blight, Daniel T. Rodgers, and Matthew Frye Jacobson.

Jones also demonstrates that Barton soon adapted Henri Dunant's original model of Red Cross exclusivity in providing medical assistance to wounded soldiers to attract wider American interest by enlarging the organization's sphere of activities to include domestic disaster relief. In 1884, Red Cross societies around the world embraced this Bartonian contribution, thereby internationalizing an American innovation. The interplay between Dunant's and Barton's ideas illustrates the vibrancy of transatlantic humanitarian exchanges and the impact of the north Atlantic world's mid-century wars of national unification on the formation of humanitarian sensibilities.

Jones portrays an indefatigable Barton who never flinched from personally directing relief missions in the midst of manmade and natural disasters, including the Johnstown, Pennsylvania, flood (1889) and the Spanish-American War (1898). Barton's intensely hands-on leadership of these activities thrust the Red Cross into a position of national prominence, but her insistence on being present to supervise the delivery of aid rather than trust subordinates with its distribution nevertheless prevented the organization from responding to *concurrent* disasters. Her vision for the organization was grand but she was

incapable of building a national institution. Under Barton's direction the Red Cross could never be more than an intimate outreach of hers, a personal mission to the distressed.

The American Red Cross from Clara Barton to the New Deal capably establishes the formation of Barton's Red Cross and the highly contingent, almost accidental way in which Barton's involvement came about, but it remains silent and generally uncritical of the organization's comparative failings in a field of more efficient entities in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Leading New York and Chicago charities and social work organizations, Jones notes, regularly outperformed the Red Cross in disaster relief fundraising and operations. The Red Cross was by existing standards lackluster in its financial management and relief administration, and was frequented by scandal. Jones, however, does not explain why anyone placed much trust in the Red Cross's performance given these publicized problems. How Barton actually achieved notoriety and fame is also underexplored, which is unfortunate, because it leaves unanswered how she outmaneuvered other entities in the minds of the American public. Over time, Barton apparently created an illusion of efficiency which perhaps mattered more than its actual performance, and did so amid the relatively few major crises of the fin de siècle.

The Red Cross never would have likely become the United States' preeminent disaster relief agency without Barton's ouster in 1904 by a cabal of Red Cross insiders who sought to transform the institution into a more capable enterprise. Barton's successor in this coup was a Washington socialite, Mabel T. Boardman, who relied extensively on the counsel of prominent social workers, financiers, jurists, and government officials, including the future U.S. president William Howard Taft. Collectively imbued with a new corporate ethos of "managerialism," the Red Cross of the early twentieth century was repositioned from Barton's cult of personality to an "organizational humanitarianism" primed for expansion along increasingly professional lines (pp. 117, 137). Perhaps signaling the imperatives of an emerging administrative society, the new preparedness mentality within the institution mirrored concurrent initiatives to recalibrate the U.S. armed forces to be instantly ready for service. Despite these critical changes, the Red Cross was arguably still an unimportant organization in American society and it operated in a reactive manner to disasters rather than in anticipation of them owing to its marginal status and shoestring budget. It would be easy to overlook this important point in this finely detailed book.

The First World War effected another pivotal transformation in the Red Cross with the ascension of new leadership composing a powerful War Council that superintended the stunning transformation of the Red Cross into the omnipresent organization it remains today. Jones concisely narrates the contours of the institution's war-induced metamorphosis, but does not mention that the Red Cross was only one of hundreds of organizations clamoring to help war sufferers. In 1914, Boardman orchestrated the Red Cross's delivery of medical aid to the two warring coalitions. Donations to support this work soon dwindled, however, which Jones claims was a function of American society having "retreated into isolationist indifference," and forced the removal of nearly all of the Red Cross medical teams dispatched across the Continent by late 1915 (p. 159). Her explanation of retrenchment overlooks the point that Americans were enlarging their support for Belgian relief and ethno-religious aid initiatives throughout Europe and the Near East at precisely the same time. An immature fundraising mechanism in a highly competitive field for charitable dollars was arguably more to blame for the organization's meager funds than isolationism.

Cognizant of the chronic insufficiency of donations that plagued Red Cross projects, Boardman cultivated an alliance with the Rockefeller Foundation in the expectation that the foundation would leverage its comparatively vast financial resources to direct the whole of the nation's relief endeavors. Leaving this story out of *The American Red Cross from Clara Barton to the New Deal* undermines the tenuousness of the organization's position at the beginning of the war. It also clouds the ways in which the foundation bankrolled the Red Cross as its War Council formed with prominent bankers, lawyers, and marketing geniuses to lead its activities that benefited from the president's endorsement and the public's receptivity to calls for alternative forms of war mobilization in 1917-18. The results of this Red Cross campaign were astonishingly successful, Jones reveals, and permanently changed the Red Cross by making it financially solvent, embedded within communities and schools throughout the United States, and virtually ensured its esteemed role within American society. In many respects the Red Cross's expanding "wild kudzu"-like tendrils enveloped the fabric of national life, just as contemporary corporate monopolies were described as overreaching octopi (p. 175). By war's end with its dense canopy of national, state, and local relief committees, the Red Cross had overshadowed practically all other private relief organizations in the nation.

Tracing the uneven trajectory that the Red Cross fol-

lowed after the First World War to achieve its preponderant status today is one of the book's foremost contributions. Although its war membership rolls included an astounding thirty-two million Americans, the organization shrank dramatically in the 1920s. It continued to encounter many obstacles to its leadership in crises at the federal and local levels. Jones underscores the enduring challenge of reconciling often-competing jurisdictional interests by revealing tensions between the national Red Cross apparatus and its new constellation of chapters that inflected autonomy in disaster relief and interpreted national policy according to local circumstances.

Jones fairly but unflinchingly criticizes the Red Cross's responses to the cataclysmic Mississippi flood of 1927, in what is possibly the strongest part of her book. It is unsurprising that the secretary of commerce, Herbert C. Hoover, who led the national response to the floods, and other whites prominent in the crisis, including Red Cross officials, epitomized the prevalent racialist biases of the age. Whereas Hoover had not discriminated against Belgians and passionately championed their war relief and exemption from forced labor by the occupying German authority, he and his peers were uncomfortable in advocating with equal strength the fair and equitable treatment of African Americans whose suffering was made worse by white bigotry and enforced labor on Mississippi levees. Jones's "The Color of Relief" section notably highlights the various ways in which the African American community rejected the expressly racist dimensions of flood aid and demanded with limited success its reformulation. Discriminatory aid practices had also been evident in the aftermath of the 1906 San Francisco earthquake and fire where the organization accepted donations from supporters of distressed Japanese and Chinese American communities but distributed little of these or other funds to minorities. Perceptions of the untrustworthiness of nonwhites and the poor powerfully conditioned Red Cross responses to disasters and the configuration of emergency aid and rehabilitation programs.

The Great Depression answered the question long asked by Red Cross officials about when to discontinue aid in the aftermath of a disaster because of the federal government's admitted responsibility for directing longer-term rehabilitation initiatives. Thereafter the organization focused on delivering short-term crisis aid amid "sudden" or "national calamities" without feeling derelict in abandoning victims who needed far more help than food, medicine, and temporary shelters to rebuild (pp. 260, 270). The parallel growth of military medical capabilities in the 1940s also stripped from the Red Cross portfolio much of its wartime auxiliary mission and permitted it to focus on new areas of national importance, such as managing blood donation services and cardiopulmonary resuscitation training.

The American Red Cross from Clara Barton to the New Deal is a richly detailed study. Encompassing far more than an institutional history of the Red Cross, this book is also a lens by which to view the profound political and cultural transformations that were reshaping American society. In fact, the book could just as easily be titled *The American Red Cross from Clara Barton to the Fair Deal* or *to the Great Society* as it carries the story forward well into the 1960s and beyond. This longer coverage illustrates, moreover, the changing constructions of humanitarianism from the mid-nineteenth century to the present, the enduring ways in which the genuine neutrality of humanitarian organizations is invariably delimited by national and local concerns, and the persistent influence of racial and socioeconomic factors on disaster relief responses. Jones has, therefore, written a significant book that should challenge historians to consider anew the intertwined development of national disaster responses and social welfare policies, and to better understand the inherent complexity of humanitarian aid.

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