

## How Clara Barton School Got Its Name

*Clara Barton School was located on Amboy Avenue in Edison from 1921 to 1984. After the school was built and named, the neighborhood around the school became known as the “Clara Barton” section of Edison.*

*Clara Barton never lived or taught in Edison. How the school and neighborhood got its name is a frequently asked question.*

Miss Dillie Thornall, the first Principal of Clara Barton School (1920-1935), had a typed history of how the school received its name. She shared this story at school functions from 1929 to 1934.

### How Clara Barton School Got It's Name

By Miss Dillie Thornall

It used to be, when your great grandmother went to school in America, that there were no public schools. In those days parents paid a certain bargained sum for the education of each boy and girl, according to their age and the number of subjects they studied. The teacher received the money.

Poor people could not afford to send their children. Clara Barton lived in Bordentown, N.J. She thought how wrong this was. So she started a free school—the very first one in New Jersey. There were six pupils at first, but her class grew until she needed a little school house for the work. It was built—a tiny house—and was the first free school in New Jersey. She taught for a few years and had 600 pupils. The public schools were then started in our state and Clara Barton accomplished what she set out to do.

She got our Red Cross started in the United States and was its first President. This is considered her greatest work. While your fathers and uncles were in World War I, it was nosed about that the little old shabby Clara Barton School at Bordentown was going to pieces and would soon be destroyed. It had not been used for years and years.

The little old desks were still in it, a few books, and the windows were broken so anyone could climb in. It was going to ruin.

The teachers in the State talked it up and everyone was interested. The State Board of Education was in favor of every child in the State being interested.

So in every school the pupils were asked for a penny. In they rolled and out they went to buy the little old school and put it in repair and keep it as a memorial of the old days. There was a fine celebration with the Governor, Senators and noted school men present.

Our Clara Barton School was being built. It had not been named. On one night our Raritan Township School Board was meeting and a letter was read from the State Board of Education. It had been sent to all the local boards in the State. In this letter the question was asked: "What school in New Jersey would be the first to be named Clara Barton?" One Board member said, "why not name our new school Clara Barton?" It was voted to do so. Thus Clara Barton School in Raritan Township is the first public school to bear the name.

*Miss Dillie F. Thornall, was born Deliverance Force Thornall at Thorndale the family farm on Parsonage Road (where the Menlo Park Mall is) in 1874. She spent 43 years as a teacher or principal in the Raritan Township (Edison) school system, retiring in 1935. She died on April 20, 1943.*