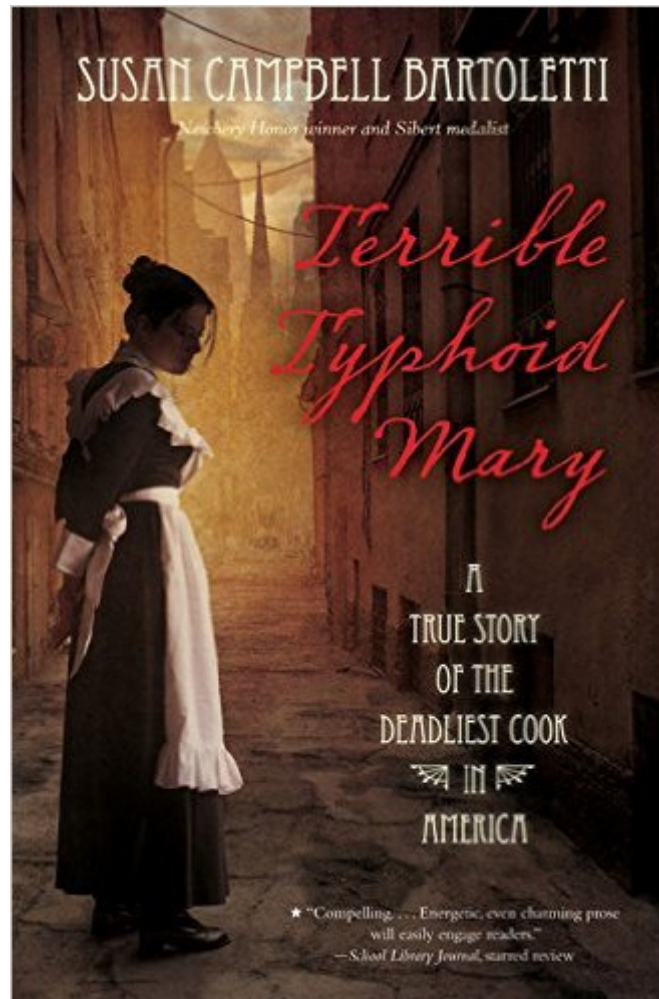


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# Terrible Typhoid Mary: A True Story Of The Deadliest Cook In America



## Synopsis

What happens when a person's reputation has been forever damaged? With archival photographs and text among other primary sources, this riveting biography of Mary Mallon by the Sibert medalist and Newbery Honor winner Susan Bartoletti looks beyond the tabloid scandal of Mary's controversial life. How she was treated by medical and legal officials reveals a lesser-known story of human and constitutional rights, entangled with the science of pathology and enduring questions about who Mary Mallon really was. How did her name become synonymous with deadly disease? And who is really responsible for the lasting legacy of Typhoid Mary? This thorough exploration includes an author's note, timeline, annotated source notes, and bibliography.

## Book Information

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Age Range: 12 and up

Grade Level: 5 - 7

## Customer Reviews

Mary Mallon was a well-kept, attractive Irishwoman who was not averse to working and that she did. Mary's skills as a cook served her well and her "fourteen-hour days" would make her well off in comparison to many servants in 1906. Next stop for her was Mr. Charles Elliot Warren's summer residence on Oyster Bay. Mr. Stricker's Servants' Agency had found her a good position, but little did she know that this position would change her life forever. Mary began to cook, preparing elaborate meals for the Warren family and less elaborate and less expensive meals

for the servants. • Unbeknownst to Mary, or anyone for that matter, her hands had been stirring up a recipe for disaster. Little nine-year-old Margaret was the first to fall ill, but not to worry, children often came down with things. It soon became evident that this was no ordinary illness when a fever persisted, spiking as high as 105 degrees. • Delirium was certainly not something to be taken lightly nor was bloody diarrhea. The verdict of course, was that little Margaret, with her telltale skin rash, • had typhoid fever. The disease was contagious and five more people in the household contracted it. Certainly it was something in the water so the house soon became vacant and Mary Mallon would need to find yet another place of employment. Mr. and Mrs. George Thompson, owner of the house in Oyster Bay, were alarmed at the prospect that they had a sick house. Something had to be done and they hired Dr. George A. Soper, a sanitary engineer who was considered an expert epidemiologist. • If anyone could solve the mystery of the typhoid-ridden household, it would be Soper. His tenacity and excellent detective skills soon sent him on the trail of Mary Mallon.

"Terrible Typhoid Mary" tells the story of the hunt to find the source of an outbreak of typhoid fever in Oyster Bay, Long Island in 1906 and the legal and medical battles involving Mary Mallon, an Irish immigrant cook who, as a healthy carrier of typhoid, infected 24 people in the homes in which she worked. The story begins when Mallon is hired on to cook for the family of Mr. Charles Elliot Warren, who were summering in Oyster Bay. Three weeks later, 9-year-old Margaret fell ill with typhoid fever, followed by five other members of the household. All survived, but the Thompsons, who owned the house, were concerned that they would not be able to rent it, until the source of the infections was discovered. They hired Dr. George Soper, a sanitation engineer with a specialty in epidemiology. He traced the source of the typhoid to the cook, Mary Mallon, excited to have discovered the first "healthy carrier" of the disease in the United States. At that point, the story becomes a melee of Mary's civil rights, or lack thereof, her justified suspicions of the health authorities, Dr. Soper's scientific ambitions, the obligation of the New York Department of Health to protect the public, and its desire to at least appear to be trying, in spite of the fact that Mallon was far from being the only healthy carrier in New York. Mary Mallon was confined to a cottage on the grounds of Riverside Hospital, a quarantine hospital, without any clear possibility of ever being able to leave. She was understandably reluctant to have gallbladder surgery, which might have secured her release, as she would have (erroneously) been declared cured. She refused to change her name and move out of state, as would have given the NY Department of Health a politically feasible way of washing its hands of the problem.

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