

Arsinoe Martin

Goshen, Elkhart County

May 1838 – November 18, 1863

Arsinoe Martin was the daughter of William Martin, a farmer and Underground Railroad conductor who help escaping slaves find freedom. She was a young school teacher at Pine Creek Sunday School when the Civil War began in 1861. When the war began, she gave a passionate speech at a recruitment rally in Elkhart County, encouraging men to enlist and promising to go with them to serve as a nurse. Thirty men subsequently enlisted.

She later served with the Indiana Sanitary Commission and was stationed at Union Army hospitals in Memphis, Tennessee, and Corinth, Mississippi, caring for the wounded soldiers. A fellow nurse, Margaret Miller, escorted Arsinoe back to her family home in Goshen, Indiana, where she died on November 18th, 1863, after contracting Typhoid fever while serving in a Union Army hospital. She was 25 when she died. On the evening of her death her mother asked if she regretted her efforts to serve as a nurse. She whispered back, “No Mother! I fulfilled my mission and am ready to die.”

Out of all the nurses that served with the Indiana Sanitary Commission, Arsinoe Martin, Hannah Powell, and Eliza “Mother” George were the only Indiana Sanitary Commission nurses who died during the Civil War while working in the Army hospitals.

Arsinoe Martin was considered a local heroine in Elkhart County, Indiana for many decades after the war.



Photo Courtesy: David McLaughlin (www.findagrave.com)



This profile was suggested to ICW by David McLaughlin, Arsinoe Martin’s great-great-great nephew

References will be published at the end of Women’s History Month.