

# Dr. Mary Frame Thomas

*Richmond, Wayne County*

October 28, 1816 – August 19, 1888

Born to Quaker parents who were strong abolitionists, Mary and her two sisters grew up as strong activists for important issues of the day. When the family lived in Washington DC, her father took Mary to hear debates in Congress, which sparked her interest in politics. After marrying Dr. Owen Thomas, Mary studied medicine and graduated from Penn's Medical College for Women in Philadelphia, PA, in 1854. After practicing for two years in Fort Wayne, she and her husband moved to Richmond, where she remained for the rest of her life.

During the Civil War she served in the Indiana Sanitary Commission and carried supplies to the front line. On the return trip she nursed soldiers wounded at the battle of Vicksburg. She was later an assistant physician with her husband in a hospital for refugees in Nashville, Tennessee. After the war she served on Richmond's board of public health, and from 1867 until her death she was the physician for the Home for Friendless Women in Richmond. She was elected to the Wayne County Medical Society in 1875, after having been rejected twice because of her sex. She became the first woman member of State Medical College in 1876; and, in 1877, she became a delegate from the State Medical Society to the American Medical Association, in which she was the second female physician admitted to membership.

Mary became involved in working for women's rights beginning in 1845 when she heard Lucretia Mott preach at a Quaker yearly meeting in Salem, Ohio. She joined the Indiana Woman's Rights Society and served as president in 1856. In 1859, she became the first woman to address the Indiana State Legislature by presenting a petition calling for a married women's property law and a woman suffrage amendment to the state constitution; however, her presentation was not taken seriously by the legislature. After the Civil War she continued her work for women's suffrage and became president of the Indiana Woman Suffrage Association. She later served a one year term as president of the American Woman Suffrage Association.

Mary Thomas died on August 19, 1888, and had designated that her pall bearers all be women; four white women representing the Good Templars, the Woman's Christian Temperance Union, the Woman's Suffrage Association and the Home for Friendless Women, and two African-American women "to represent the Abolition cause and their race." (*Richmond Daily Telegram*, 21 Aug 1888)



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