

MARY ELIZA MAHONEY

LIFESPAN CELEBRATES BLACK HISTORY MONTH

WHO WAS MARY ELIZA MAHONEY?

Born in Boston to two freed slaves originally from North Carolina, Mary Eliza Mahoney would spend her life contributing greatly to the nursing profession, creating a path for many to follow behind her. She began working for the New England Hospital for Women and Children at 18, and spent 15 years working seven days per week as a maid and cook before enrolling in the hospital's school at age 33. She was one of four to graduate, out of a class that started with 42 women. Ms. Mahoney became the first Black registered nurse in the United States and began her career as a private care nurse.

Due to the discrimination and oppression of Black people in public nursing, Ms. Mahoney worked as a private care nurse throughout New England and across the Eastern Seaboard, mostly to new mothers and their newborn children. The families that she worked for praised her for her work ethic and professionalism which led to her being recognized as a first class nurse with a knack for building rapport and honing her skills. She dedicated her career to advocating and educating other Black nurses in response to the persistent racism she experienced at the hands of her white counterparts. Her efforts had a significant influence on eliminating racial discrimination in the RN profession.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- 1896 - Joined the Nurses Associated Alumnae of the U.S. and Canada (now the American Nurses Association)
- 1908 - Co-founded the Association of Colored Graduate Nurses (ACGN)
- 1909 - Elected as the national chaplain and awarded a lifetime membership for the ACGN
- One of the first women to register to vote in Boston after the ratification of the 19th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution
- 1936 - National Association of Colored Graduate Nurses created the "Mary Mahoney Award" in honor of her achievements, which is still given by the American Nurses Association
- 1976 - Inducted into the American Hospital Association Hall of Fame
- 1993 - Inducted into the National Women's Hall of Fame in Seneca Falls, NY



Born: May 7th, 1845

Died: January 4th, 1926
after a 3 year battle with
breast cancer



The Mary Mahoney Memorial
Health Center opened in 1973
in Oklahoma City

SOURCES AND FURTHER READING:

<https://wicenterfornursing.org/mary-elizabeth-mahoney-first-african-american-nurse/>
<https://www.womenshistory.org/education-resources/biographies/mary-mahoney>

"Work more and better the coming year
than the previous year."
- Mary Eliza Mahoney