

Alfaretta Martha (Poorman) Hart

Alfaretta Martha (Poorman) Hart was born December 17, 1861 in Clairsville, Ohio. She was the daughter of Christian Longstreath and Martha Ann (Eibbert) Poorman. She married Thomas F. Hart in 1883. They were the parents of Bertha Elizabeth, Lawrence Albert, and Thomas Francis, Jr. She and Thomas moved to Indiana in the 1890's where he became a prominent Eastern Indiana manufacture, and Alfaretta became more than a mother and housewife.

In 1912, she was one of the two people elected to fill a vacancy left by the retirement of Dr. G.W. H. Kemper and Miss Belle Thomas. She also built up a reputation as an ardent and eloquent advocate of the uplifting and purification of the morals of the city which led to her appointment by Mayor Rollin Hl Bunch as Muncie's first police matron.

In the November 18, 1913, the Muncie Morning Star wrote that Hart had announced she really did not need the money she would be receiving as matron, so she would be using it to help maintain the office. She also stated that she was planning to organize a civic league composed of the prominent women of Muncie to act as an advisory board to Mrs. Hart under the police matrons' office.

Mrs. Hart's uniform that she designed demanded respect. It consisted of a dark blue walking length skirt and a Norfolk jacket with cuffs, collar and belt. Brass buttons down the front and cuffs. She wore a white shirtwaist blouse with a Roman collar. A heavy cassimere navy blue military cape and cap were worn on the street. She wore a policeman's star on the left breast, always on the outside of the garment. Shoes were of heavy kid, 18 buttons. Her baton was dark cherry wood with heavy red sild cord and tassel.

Because there was no room for her at the police station, Alfaretta opened an office at 405 The Johnson which included her own phone. Her plans were to be conveniently available to parents who might want talk to come to her with concerns about their daughters. She believed a if a young girl had been careless a gentle talk with her, showing her the error of her ways and promising to help her would do a girl much good.

One of her projects for the moral benefit to establish "The Newsboys Club of Muncie". Before a boy could join the club, he was required to promise he would not swear, smoke cigarettes, or go into a saloon or drink intoxicating liquor.

Perhaps her biggest case happened when a doctor for on of the schools north of the railroad examined a fourteen year old girl and found she had a disease. Further investigation disclosed the facts and she was taken before Mrs. Hart who persuaded the girl to tell about her life the past few months. The young girl implicated several girl companions and a number of young boys at their school had relations with each other. The parents were informed and visits were made to the girls homes and it was determined the whole thing hinged upon



unfortunate circumstances to which each of the girls had been subjected. No charges were filed, but the girls had to promise to conduct themselves properly in the future. The biggest concern was the experience might “blight the characters of the girls”.

March 4, 1914, Hart went to war against Muncie’s hypocritical “drys” during a speech at the Wysor Grand Hotel when she accused prohibitionist men of frequenting the red light districts, and cheating on their wives with young girls. She once said that she deplored and condemned drunkenness and debauchery, but she deplored and condemned hypocrisy more, and added that she had seen much of both of Muncie.

At the end of 1914, Alfaretta resigned her job as policewoman sighting “health reasons”. She and her husband soon moved from Muncie to Dallas, Texas. But she did not retire. In her later years, she wrote letters of travel. At the time of her death on January 15, 1951 she was the president of the Chicago Oil Company and was a bank director.