

MS. HARRIET ROSS TUBMAN (Deceased)

Harriet Tubman was born a slave known as Araminta Ross in 1822 on Anthony Thompson's plantation in Dorchester County, Maryland. In 1849, she escaped to freedom in Pennsylvania and, thereafter, led a number of trips to free upwards of eighty fellow slaves. She is undoubtedly most famous for her Underground Railroad activities. However, from 1862-1865, she also acted as a spy and scout for the Union Army, operating against Confederate forces and their civilian supporters in South Carolina, Florida, and Georgia.

In approximately January 1862, Governor John Andrews of Massachusetts, a staunch abolitionist and friend of Tubman's, asked her to travel to South Carolina as a spy and scout. She was also to conduct other missions as required, including nursing, making medicines from roots and herbs, and training the newly freed in applying skills learned on the plantation to their new lives. Governor Andrews provided her with a pass that allowed her to travel throughout the Union controlled areas as she desired. Upon arriving in Beaufort, South Carolina, in the spring of 1863, she recruited at least nine former slaves, who could easily maneuver around and mingle with Confederate troops and sympathizers. These spies collected intelligence concerning enemy positions and strengths, movements, and fortifications in Confederate controlled areas. Tubman also collected information through systematic questioning of escaping slaves, analyzed all collected information, and conducted strategic planning.

One of her most daring and important missions took place in June 1863, when Tubman and her spies collected vital intelligence about Confederate reinforcements and heavily mined waters along the Combahee River north of Beaufort. Col. James Montgomery, commander of the Second South Carolina Volunteers of African Descent, not only used the intelligence collected by Tubman's network of spies but also chose her to lead a raid of six Southern plantations on the River. The raid liberated an estimated 750 men, women and children held in bondage, seized or destroyed millions of dollars of Confederate staples, and opened the river for Union boats. It is estimated that at least 100 men freed in this raid later joined the Union Army as soldiers. Reporting on the raid to Secretary of War Edwin Stanton, Brig. Gen. Rufus Saxton, the military governor of Beaufort, said, "This is the only military command in American history wherein a woman, black or white, led the raid, and under whose inspiration it was originated and conducted".

After the Combahee River Raid, Ms. Tubman returned to Beaufort and continued to collect information as available until the end of the war. At that time, Harriet worked in the Home for Destitute Colored Women and Children in Washington, D.C., and provided nursing care at Fort Monroe in Hampton, Virginia. She then returned to Auburn, New York, where she set up one of her homes for the homeless and another as a nursing home and care facility for the



elderly. She died of pneumonia on 10 March 1913, and was buried with military honors at Fort Hill Cemetery in Auburn.

Harriet Tubman was made an Honorary Member of the MI Corps in 2019 and was inducted into the MI Hall of Fame in 2021.