

**Historical Marker - L1619C - Ellen May Tower / Spanish-American War Nurse (Marker ID#:L1619C)**



**Front - Title/Description**

***Ellen May Tower***

The daughter of Civil War Captain Samuel and Sarah Tower, Ellen May Tower was born May 8, 1868, in Byron. She attended Chaffee School, the Byron Village School, and a nurse’s training program at Detroit’s Grace Hospital. She worked for several years at the Michigan School for the Blind. On April 21, 1898, Tower volunteered for service as an army nurse “in the event of war between the United States and Spain.” War was declared by Spain three days later. She took her oath on September 1, 1898, and was sent to Camp Wikoff, located at Montauk Point, New York. Known as one of the “Camp Wikoff Angels,” she cared for soldiers who had been returned to the United States to recover from injuries or disease. In late September 1898 she volunteered for duty in Puerto Rico where she died less than three months later.

**Significant Date:**

Civil War and After (1860-1875)

**Registry Year:** 1989     **Erected Date:** 1989

**Marker Location**

**Address:** 325 West Maple

**City:** Byron

**State:** MI     **ZipCode:**

**County:** Shiawassee

**Township:** Burns

**Lat:** 42.82410300 / **Long:** -83.94770900

**Web URL:**

**Back - Title/Description**

***Spanish-American War Nurse***

During the Spanish-American War, approximately ninety percent of American casualties resulted from disease. On December 9, 1898, Ellen May Tower, an army nurse from Byron, died of typhoid fever in a hospital tent after only ten weeks abroad. Her remains arrived in Detroit on January 15, 1899, and her funeral took place in Byron two days later. The Owosso Evening Argus hailed the event as the first military funeral in Michigan for a woman. Thousands of service men, villagers, and visitors attended. Dr. Sterling, who had awarded Tower’s nursing diploma five years before to the day, delivered her eulogy. The Tower family had moved to Onaway in the 1880s. Nearby, the village of Tower was named for the nurse when it was founded in 1899.