

PENZA STATE UNIVERSITY DENTISTRY DEPARTMENT HISTORY PROJECT



Elizabeth Blackwell (1821-1910)

The First Women Doctor

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1-Dr.Elizabeth Blackwell

- ◎ **Year Of Birth/Death** : 1821-1910
- ◎ **Medical School:** Geneva Medical College
- ◎ **Geography, location:** New York
- ◎ **Career Path:** Obstetrics and gynecology



2-Elizabeth Inspiration :

- Elizabeth Blackwell said she turned to medicine after a close friend who was dying suggested she would have been spared her worst suffering if her physician had been a woman

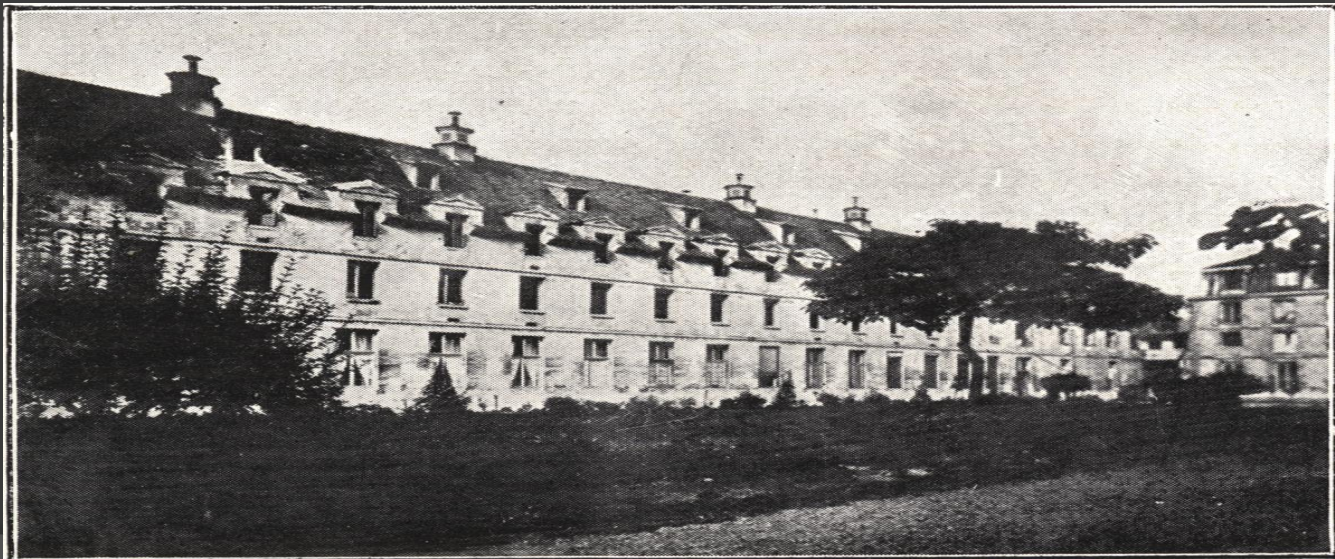


"I must have something to engross my thoughts, some object in life which will fill this vacuum, and prevent this sad wearing away of the heart."

Elizabeth Blackwell

3-Biography:

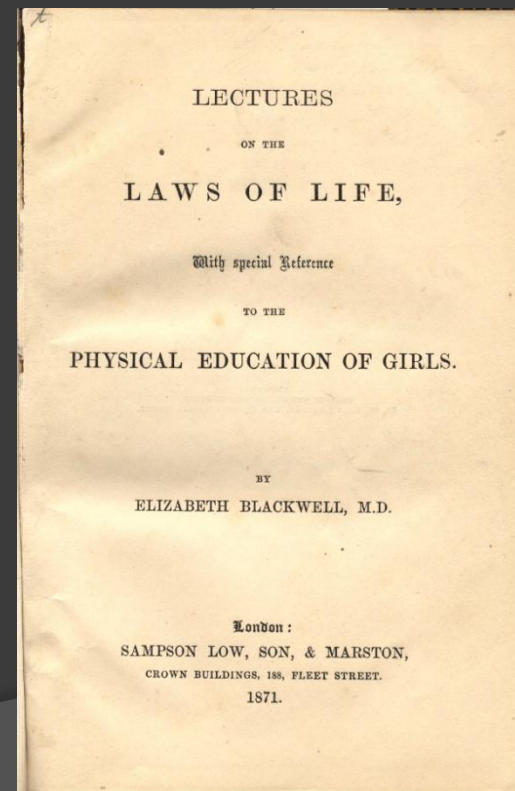
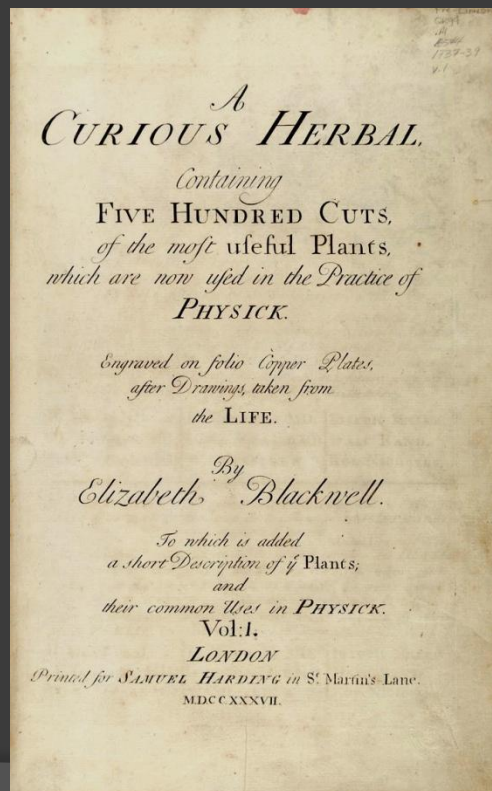
- In 1849 she graduated from New York's Geneva Medical College.
- Elizabeth Blackwell became the first woman in America to earn the M.D. degree.



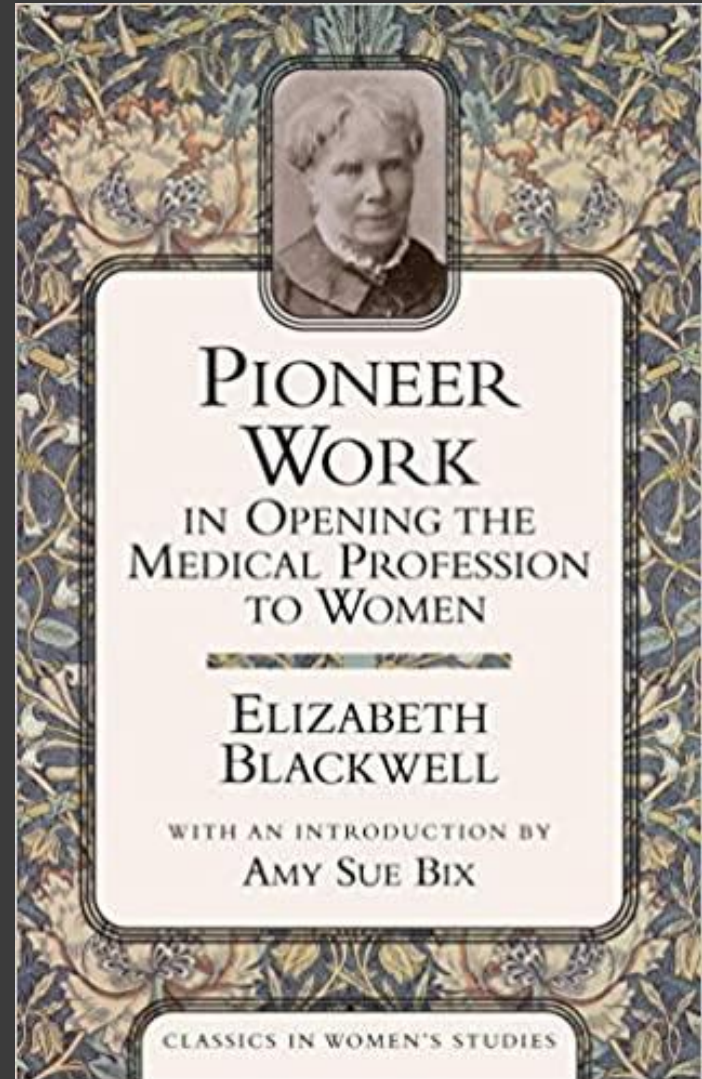
- She supported medical education for women and helped many other women's careers
- In 1857 she offered a practical solution to one of the problems facing women who were rejected from internships.



- She published books on the issue of women in medicine
- Examples: *Medicine as a Profession For Women* in 1860 and *Address on the Medical Education of Women* in 1864.



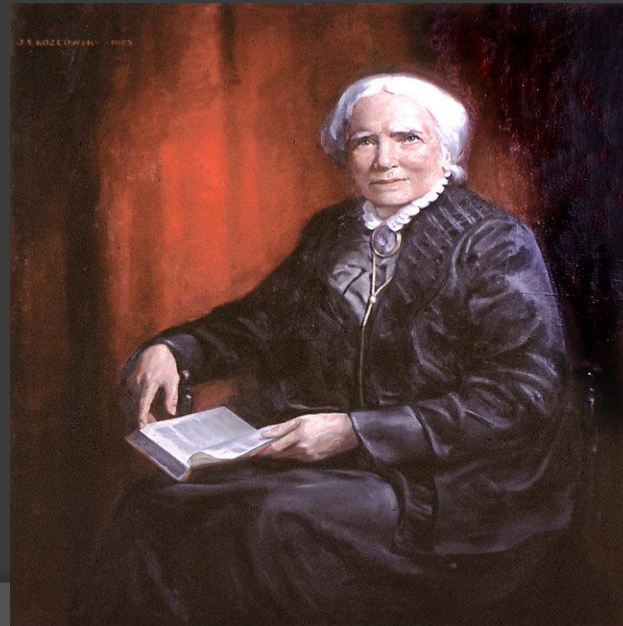
- In her book *Pioneer Work in Opening the Medical Profession to Women*, published in 1895
- She said she had "hated everything connected with the body, and could not bear the sight of a medical book... My favorite studies were history and metaphysics, and the very thought of dwelling on the physical structure of the body and its various ailments filled me with disgust."
- she went into teaching, then considered more suitable for a woman. She claimed that she turned to medicine after a close friend who was dying suggested she would have been spared her worst suffering if her physician had been a woman.



- ⦿ Elizabeth Blackwell was born in Bristol, England in 1821 to Hannah Lane and Samuel Blackwell.
- ⦿ For financial reasons and her father wanted to help abolish slavery, the family moved to America when Elizabeth was 11 years old. Her father died in 1838.



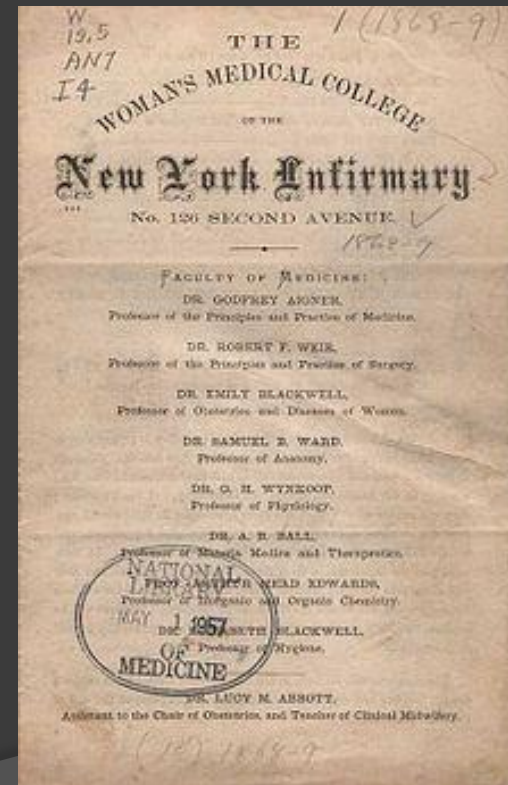
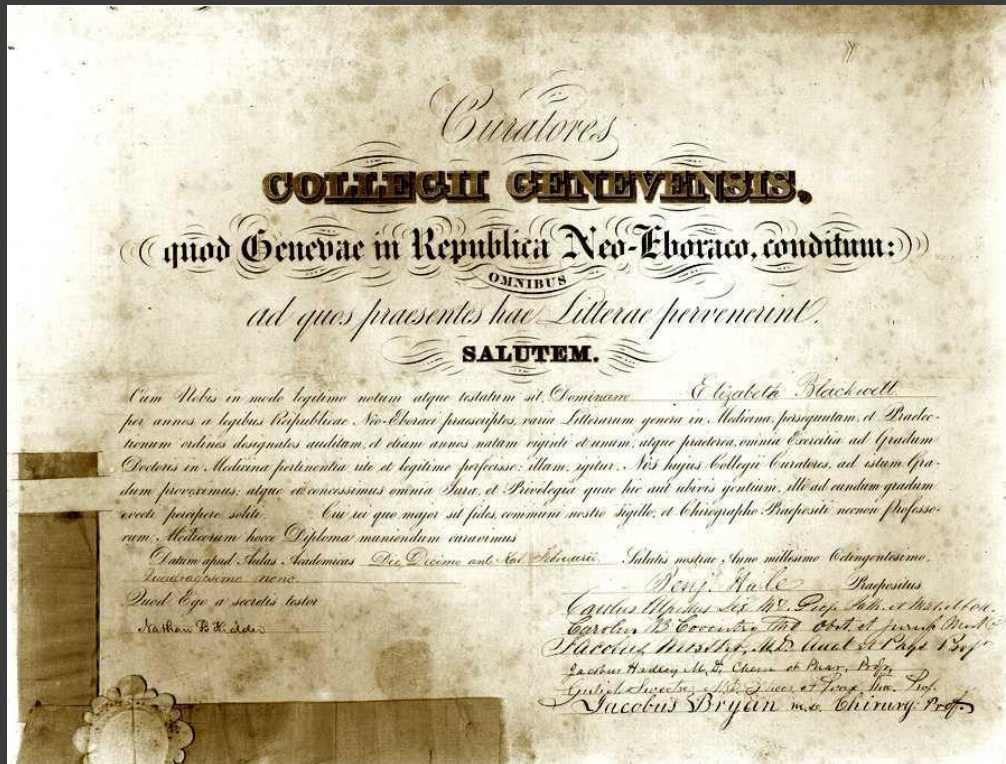
- ⦿ Blackwell had no idea how to become a physician, so she consulted with several physicians known by her family
- ⦿ She convinced two physician friends to let her read medicine with them for a year, and applied to all the medical schools in New York and Philadelphia.
- ⦿ She was accepted by Geneva Medical College in western New York state in 1847.



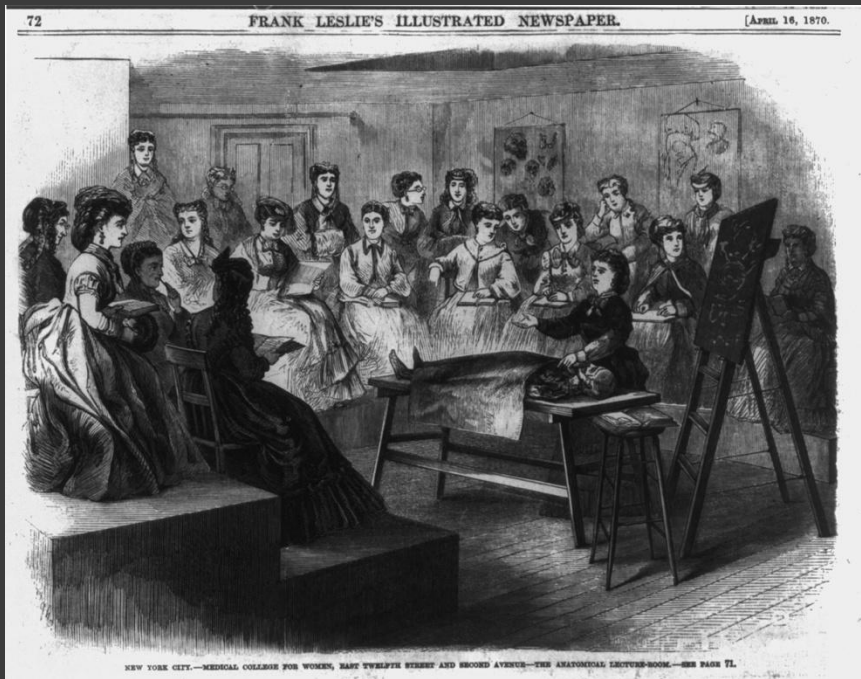
- The faculty, assuming that the all-male student body would never agree to a woman joining their ranks, allowed them to vote on her admission. As a joke, they voted "yes," and she gained admittance, despite the reluctance of most students and faculty.



- Two years later, in 1849, Elizabeth Blackwell became the first woman to receive an M.D. degree from an American medical school.



- ◉ She worked in clinics in London and Paris for two years
- ◉ Studied midwifery at La Maternité where she contracted "purulent ophthalmia" from a young patient.



- ◉ When Blackwell lost sight in one eye, she returned to New York City in 1851, giving up her dream of becoming a surgeon.
- ◉ Dr. Elizabeth Blackwell established a practice in New York City, but had few patients and few opportunities for intellectual exchange with other physicians



- " She applied for a job as physician at the women's department of a large city dispensary, but was refused.
- In 1853 she opened her own dispensary in a single rented room, seeing patients three afternoons a week.
- The dispensary was incorporated in 1854 and moved to a small house she bought on 15th Street.



- Her sister, Dr. Emily Blackwell, joined her in 1856 and, together with Dr. Marie Zakrzewska.
- They opened the New York Infirmary for Women and Children at 64 Bleecker Street in 1857. This institution and its medical college for women (opened 1867) provided training and experience for women doctors and medical care for the poor.



- As her health declined, Blackwell gave up the practice of medicine in the late 1870s, though she still campaigned for reform.

