Elizabeth Blackwell

Elizabeth Blackwell was the first woman doctor in the United States. She was born in England in 1821. At the time, most girls did not go to school. But Elizabeth's father believed girls should learn the same things as boys. He paid tutors to teach Elizabeth and her sisters. He could afford tutors because he ran a large factory that made sugar.

Later, Mr. Blackwell's business failed, so the family moved to the United States. First they lived in New York. Then they moved to Ohio, where Mr. Blackwell opened another sugar factory. However, he soon grew ill and died. After that, Elizabeth, her mother, and sisters needed money, so they opened a school. At about that time, Elizabeth was talking with a sick friend. The friend said she would rather be looked after by a woman doctor than by a man. Elizabeth decided to become a doctor, but no medical schools would take a woman student.

For a while, Elizabeth was a teacher in Kentucky, where she lived with a doctor's family. The doctor did her a favor and helped her to start learning about medicine. Finally, the Geneva Medical College, in Geneva, New York, let her enroll.

In 1849, Elizabeth became the first woman to complete medical school in the U.S. But hospitals would not let her work, so she started her own hospital with her sister Emily, who also became a doctor. During the Civil War, the sisters trained nurses to help take care of soldiers. Elizabeth also started a school in the U.S. and another in England to teach more women to be doctors. Elizabeth lived until 1910.