

THE OLDEST WOMAN PHYSICIAN IN ENGLAND

The Journal of the American Medical Association recently republished a medical news report, which first appeared in February 1909,* headed "The oldest woman physician in England".

It gave the following account of her life and achievements.

The oldest woman physician in England and the first woman to take a medical qualification and be placed on the medical register, Dr. Elizabeth Blackwell, has celebrated her eighty-eighth birthday at Hastings. She received numerous congratulations on the event from all parts of England and America. Born in Bristol, her life epitomizes the long struggle of women for admission into the medical profession in this country. Her inspiration for the revolution she wrought in breaking down one of the strongest prejudices in this very conservative country was probably largely derived from her American training ... She began her preliminary studies in Asheville, North Carolina, in 1845. She had some difficulty in entering a medical school, as the universities of Philadelphia and of New York refused to consider her application. At Geneva, New York, she was more fortunate and one of her most valued possessions is the copy of the resolution passed in October 1847, when it was unanimously agreed: "That one of the radical principles of a republican government is the universal education of both sexes; that in every branch of scientific education the door would be open equally to all, that the application of Elizabeth Blackwell to become a member of our class meets our entire approval." ... On Jan. 25, 1849, she was graduated. She returned to Philadelphia and began to practice in ... hospital wards ... To gain further experience she came to ... Paris, and then ... London, where she obtained from the late Sir James Paget the valued privilege of studying in the wards of St. Bartholomew's hospital. In 1859 Dr. Blackwell was the first woman whose name was placed on the British Medical Register.

We can but marvel at her singular determination and the seminal changes she has wrought!



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* The oldest woman physician in England. JAMA 1909; 52: 783-784.