



Photo: Eliza A. Blaker School #55

Eliza Blaker

Indianapolis, Marion County

March 5, 1854 – December 4, 1926

As the eldest of three children, Eliza Blaker was born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Influenced by a Quaker tradition and her father's social activism in causes such as the abolition of slavery, she developed a political stance that focused on empowering those less fortunate. She assumed many responsibilities at a young age because her family struggled financially and her father died when she was 15 years old. These early experiences made her sensitive to human suffering and gave her a strong sense of community.

Eliza was a pioneer who shaped public education when she established and served as the superintendent of Indianapolis' free kindergartens, providing education and social services for the city's poor families. She was a social progressive who lobbied effectively for educational and social causes in Indianapolis, Indiana, for forty-four years. She headed the free kindergarten movement in Indianapolis from 1882 to 1926. She also established the Indianapolis Kindergarten and Primary Normal Training School at her Indianapolis home in 1882. Renamed the Teachers College of Indianapolis in 1905, she served as its president until her death in 1926. Four years later it became part of the education department at Butler University. In addition to her work as an education, Blaker founded and was president of the Indianapolis Council of Women and a member of the Women's Rotary Club and Indianapolis' Contemporary Club.

Eliza Blaker died on December 4, 1926, and is interred at Crown Hill Cemetery. After her death, alumnae and faculty of the Teachers College of Indianapolis established the Eliza A. Blaker Club in 1934 and established the Eliza Blaker Memorial Room in her honor at Butler University's Irwin Library in 1943. In 1958, the Indianapolis Public Schools named an elementary school the Eliza A. Blaker School 55 in her honor.

- For more information about Eliza Blaker, go to: <https://www.learningtogive.org/resources/blaker-eliza-ann>.
- For more information about *Writing Her Story*, go to: <http://www.in.gov/icw/2440.htm>.

Additional and more detailed references available at the end of Women's History Month



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