

Rebecca Lee Davis Crumpler, MD

Date of Birth: 8th February, 1831
Spouse: Wyatt Lee - married. 1852 -1863 (his death)
Arthur Crumpler - married 1865
Children: Lizzie Sinclair Crumpler (b. 1870)
Date of Death: 9th March 1895 (68 yrs old)



Noteable Works and Achievements

- First African- American woman physician (1863)
- Wrote and Published *A Book of Medical Discourses in Two Parts* (1883)
- *The Rebecca Lee Society*, one of the first medical societies for women, was named in her honor.

Biography

Feb. 8, 1831-March 9, 1869

Dr. Rebecca Lee Davis Crumpler was the first African American physician in the United States. Born Rebecca Davis, in Christiana, Delaware, she was raised by her Aunt, a nurse, in Pennsylvania. Her influence made a great impression upon Rebecca growing up as she watched her Aunt care for their infirm neighbors and eventually worked alongside her once she was an adult nursing in the community. (Cannon, 2016).

Given the era, Dr. Crumpler's education was excellent; she attended the *West Newton English and Classical School* in Massachusetts, focusing on mathematics and when she moved to Charlestown, Massachusetts, in 1852, she gained employment as a nurse. In 1860 she was finally accepted into the *New England Female Medical College*, founded by Dr. Israel Tisdale and Samuel Gregory.

Graduating from *The New England Female Medical Collage* in Boston, Massachusetts, in 1864, Dr. Crumpler practiced medicine in Boston. She faced many challenges as a doctor at the time, both as a woman and as an African American. She was named Doctor of Medicine after three years of course work and her thesis on the 1st of March 1864 and was the first African-American woman in the United States to ear the degree and the only to ever graduate from the *New England Medical Collage* (Jordan, 2013).

Her specialization in medicine was that of the care of women and children and the poor. When she moved to Richmond, Virginia, after marrying her 2nd husband Arthur Crumpler, she focused on her medical practice by serving different

organizations like the Freedmen's Bureau that helped Freed Slaves (Cannon, 2016).

In 1869, at the age of 38 she and her husband Arthur returned to Boston, MA and in 1870 she had her daughter Lizzie. There, she continued to practice out of her home, often giving nutritional aid to women and children. Her final move was to Hyde Park, New York with Arthur in 1880.

While she no longer practiced medicine there, , New York is where she wrote and published her medical text *A book of Medical Discourses in Two Parts*; the first focused on young childhood ailments and the second on Women's health issues and the ailments of the youth in total. *A book of Medical Discourses in Two Parts* is most likely the very first medical textbook written by an African American.

Dr. Crumpler died at the age of 64 on the 9th of March 1895. She was honoured for her ground-breaking career in medicine in 1989 by an organization that Promotes Female Physicians 104 years after her death.

Reading List

Cannon, C. (2016). *An Amazing Race: The Accomplishments and the Perseverance of Black People*. AuthorHouse.

Crumpler, R. D. (2017). *A book of Medical Discourses in Two Parts*. Forgotten Books.

Jordan, J. H. (2013). *Black Americans 17th Century to 21st Century*. Trafford Publishing.