DR. FLORENCE RENA SABIN

When: 1871-1953

Where: Central City and Denver

Why Important: Dr. Sabin was the first female medical professor at Johns Hopkins as well as a major medical reformer in Colorado. She also was the first female member of the National Academy of Sciences and first female physician-scientist at Rockefeller Institute for Medical Research.

DR. FLORENCE RENA SABIN

Florence Rena Sabin was born November 9, 1871 in Central City, Colorado. She attended Smith College, a women's school in Massachusetts. She went on to Johns Hopkins University Medical School. The school had just opened their doors to women and Florence was one of only fourteen women in her class.

Dr. Sabin was very talented and became a professor at Johns Hopkins in 1917. This made her the first woman to become a full professor at any medical college in the country! Just a few years later, in 1924, Dr. Sabin was elected the first woman president of the American Association of Anatomists and first lifetime woman member of the National Academy of Sciences.

Although a talented teacher, Dr. Sabin decided to concentrate on research. In 1925, she became Head of the Department of Cellular Studies at the Rockefeller Institute for Medical Research. Her research focused on fighting tuberculosis.

In 1938, Rabin retired to Colorado. However, retirement was short-lived. Governor Vivian asked her to lead the State Health Committee. At the time, Colorado had one of the highest infant death rates in the country as well as the third-highest scarlet fever rates and the fifth-highest diphtheria total.

Dr. Sabin reformed health care, writing eight health bills that the legislature passed. In 1947 Mayor Quigg Newton declared Dr. Sabin the new Denver Manager of Health and Charities. Dr. Sabin soon began a city-wide x-ray and public education program that reduced the Denver tuberculosis rate by fifty percent.

Florence died in Denver in 1953. To honor her great works, the State sent a statue of her to represent Colorado in the Statuary Hall at the Capitol in Washington.