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Elizabeth Blackwell

Maura Reilly: In 1849 Elizabeth Blackwell became the first woman to receive a medical degree in the United States. The English-born physician opened the field for other women, and her interest in improving access to medical care and providing a place for women to work in the medical field led her to found important institutions such as the New York Infirmary for Women and Children in 1857 and the National Health Society in 1871. This place setting is meant as a metaphor for both Blackwell's triumphs and her difficulties in the field of medicine. The swirling motion depicted in the plate and runner symbolize the shift in thinking that allowed for more opportunities for women, but the brilliant colors of the runner are veiled in a thin gray chiffon, suggesting the difficulties she and other women pursuing careers in male-dominated fields still had to face. The plate's brilliantly colored forms swirl toward a central "black well," a visual pun on the doctor's name, while the illuminated *E* on the front of the runner front is a stethoscope to indicate her status as the first female doctor in the United States.

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