

Celestia Angenette Bloss

In 1838, farmer and brick maker Isaac Moore asked his sister-in-law, Celestia Bloss, to teach his children in an unused room in the Moore house at 1496 Clover Street. Isaac's wife, Amy Kennedy Bloss Moore, and Celestia were members of a large family with progressive ideas. Their brother was William Clough Bloss, a friend of Frederick Douglass and a prominent abolitionist.

Believing that the Moore children would benefit from the presence of other scholars, Celestia opened the school to neighborhood children. The co-educational school soon outgrew its one room space in the main house and moved into a white frame building in the rear of the garden. Soon the school's reputation spread beyond Brighton, bringing boarding students who stayed in the Moore house. Pupils came from Rochester, Syracuse, Oswego, Elmira, and Auburn, in addition to the states of Michigan, Tennessee, Indiana, Illinois, Ohio, Virginia, and provinces of Canada.

By 1845, the "Little White Schoolhouse" could no longer accommodate the students. Isaac and Amy Moore deeded five acres at the corner of Clover Street and Elmwood Avenue to Celestia Bloss. A brick, three-story, sixteen-room building with classroom and dormitory space replaced the small frame garden school. Three years later, the Clover Street Seminary was incorporated by the New York State Legislature. A staff of twenty-two offered education in such subjects as Latin, French, Italian, astronomy, botany, bookkeeping, penmanship, piano, painting, and music.

In 1849, at the age of thirty-seven, Celestia married widower Isaac W. Brewster. Apparently she retained her maiden name for she was often called Miss Bloss in references published after 1849. Described as diminutive and barely five feet in height, she is also said to have had a commanding presence but was much admired and loved by her students. In addition to her responsibilities with the Seminary, she authored two textbooks: *Bloss's Ancient History* (1847) and *Heroines of the Crusades* (1853).

Celestia Bloss died in 1855 at the age of forty-three and is buried with her husband in Brighton Cemetery. On top of her large marble marker, funded by the contributions of about five hundred students, is a carved scroll, a book representing "Bloss's Ancient History," and a Bible. The marker says in part, "...This monument was erected by her pupils, an enduring testimony of their affection and respect. Her life was devoted to the cause of education..."

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