

# Lydia Moss Bradley

*Vevay, Switzerland County*

July 31, 1816 – January 16, 1908

Born along the Ohio River, Lydia Moss Bradley lived in Vevay, Indiana, with her family until she was 31. She grew up on the frontier and was educated in a log home. She married Tobias Bradley and lived in Switzerland County until 1847, when they moved to Peoria, Illinois. She later became a wealthy businesswoman, an entrepreneur and the founder of what eventually would become Bradley University. She is one of only two women from Indiana inducted into the National Women's Hall of Fame.

Bradley had six children, all but one died in infancy, succumbing to various frontier diseases. The last daughter died at the age of fifteen. After becoming a millionaire through her various business activities, she founded Bradley Polytechnic Institute in 1896 in memory of her children. The Bradleys had discussed establishing an orphanage; however, Lydia Bradley decided to found a school where "young people could learn how to do practical things to prepare them in the modern world." Inspired by the goal of creating an institute where boys and girls could learn together and where practical and classical educations were combined, Lydia Bradley became a pioneer in many fields and a leader in land development and agriculture. In June 1898, its first graduate was Cora Unland.

Bradley was the first female member of an American national bank board when she joined the Board of Directors of Peoria's First National Bank. In 1884, she built the Bradley Home for Aged Women to care for widowed and childless women. She also donated forty acres to the City of Peoria, which is known as the Laura Bradley Park, in honor of her deceased daughter.

As her fortune grew, Lydia Bradley's charities increased as well. In a biographical portrait written about her, she and her many good deeds are described as a life well-spent, citing Matthew 25:40, "Inasmuch as ye have done it to one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto Me."

---


For more information about Lydia Moss Bradley, go to:

<https://www.womenofthehall.org/inductee/lydia-moss-bradley/>.

For more information about *Writing Her Story*, go to: <http://www.in.gov/icw/2440.htm>.

Photo: National Women's Hall of Fame. *Lydia Moss Bradley*. Retrieved from:

<https://www.womenofthehall.org/inductee/lydia-moss-bradley/>.

  
*Writing Her Story*  
31 Women in 31 Days

INDIANA  
COMMISSION  
for women