

Dorothea Lynde Dix Biography

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Biography

Dorothea Lynde Dix (4 April 1802-18 July 1887), reformer and miscellaneous writer, left an unhappy home environment in Hampden, Maine, when she was ten to live with her grandparents in Boston. In 1821 she opened a school and over the next thirteen years taught, wrote devotional works reflecting her firm Unitarian convictions, and authored *Conversations on Common Things* (Boston: Munroe & Francis, 1824), a widely used science textbook. Ill health forced her to close the school and she spent the next few years travelling and recuperating. The turning point in Dix's career came in 1841, when she began teaching at the East Cambridge House of Corrections. Shocked by the cruel and primitive conditions she saw there, Dix devoted the rest of her life to the reform of prisons and mental institutions. She became active politically and her *Memorial to the Legislature of Massachusetts* (Boston: Munroe & Francis, 1843) and *Remarks on Prisons and Prison Discipline* (Boston: Munroe & Francis, 1845), written at Horace Mann's suggestion, were influential in bringing about changes in mental health care and penal reform. She died in Trenton, New Jersey.