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Base & Summit: American Women's Right on Either Side of the Passing of the 19th Amendment

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Base & Summit: American Women's
Rights on Either Side of the Passing of
the 19th Amendment

Abigail Fer

Carrie Lane Chapman Girlhood Home

Agenda

American Women's Rights ca. 1900 v.

ca. 1920

- Industries & Wages

- Divorce Rights: Custody of Children

- Property Rights of Married Women

Conclusion

References

American Women's Industries & Wages

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1900: Women in Various Industries

From the *Twenty Fifth Annual Report of the Bureau of Labor Statistics to the 17th General Assembly of the State of Ohio in 1901*

146 LEGAL AND POLITICAL STATUS OF WOMEN

	AGRICULTURAL	PROFESSIONAL AND PERSONAL	DOMESTIC	TRADE AND TRANSPORTATION	MANUFACTURING AND MECHANICAL	CLERICAL	TOTAL
1870	356	19,953		59	2,758		23,126
1880	1,386	34,357		660	8,442		44,845
1890	8,094	18,800	33,016	4,431	16,076		80,417
1900	8,132	23,285	43,350	10,820	21,296		106,883
1910	9,557	28,864	44,031	13,299	24,466	10,802	131,514
1915	4,495	30,307	32,318	28,392	14,200		110,115

(“Working Women”)

1900-1915: Women in Various Industries

The graph shows a dramatic increase in the total of women working (from 106,883 to 110,115) and an increase in women working in transportation (10,820 to 28,392) and professional and personal industries (23,285 to 30,307). Notably, there was also a downward shift in domestic workers (43,350 to 32,318) and agriculture (8,132 to 4,495) (“Working Women”)

1901: Women's Wages

Additionally, the Bureau of Labor and Statistics in Ohio for 1901 took a survey of over 6,920 women from Cleveland, Columbus, and Cincinnati, and found that the average age of workers was 21 and the average weekly income was \$4.83 (“Working Women”), which according to the *CPI Inflation Calculator* is a mere \$145.90 in 2019 dollars.

1922: Women's Wages

A few years following the passage of the 19th Amendment, *The Annual Report of The Director of the Women's Bureau* states that earnings are on the incline. In Missouri alone their weekly earnings according to CPI Inflation calculator would be \$193.33 in 2019 dollars.

Earnings.

The figures showing weekly earnings indicate that the standards of wages are even lower than those of hours in the States under consideration. The median earnings for one week for all of the white women included in each survey were as follows:

Kentucky	\$10.75
South Carolina	9.50
Alabama	8.80
Arkansas	11.60
Missouri	12.65

1900: Divorce Rights: Custody of Children

According to *A Treatise on the Law of Divorce and Annulment* written by William Thomas, men and women were fairly equal in the consideration of who would keep children after a divorce, except in the case in which the woman committed adultery. In this case, most of the time this act would cause women to lose their right to custody over their children (“Custody and Support of Children”).

1919: Divorce Rights: Custody of Children

A Treatise on the Law of Married Women in Texas by Ocie Speer had similar claims as the previous period with an emphasis on what was better for the child. However, there was no such claim in the more modern treatise that a woman accused of adultery would lose the custody of her children.

1900: Women's Property Rights

Legal and Political Status of Women in Iowa stated

In a case decided in 1890 the Supreme Court of Iowa ruled that land purchased by the wife with money paid her for taking care of her husband's mother and other money earned by her, could not be taken by the husband's creditors, on the ground that they believed it to be the husband's; nor could the crops from a farm worked by the wife and sons be held for the husband's debts,

This is great progress from when Iowa became a state in 1846 in which the Constitution did not mention women's right to property at all ("Property Rights of Women").

1920: Women's Property Rights

Legal and Political Status of Women in Iowa asserted that by 1920,

The *Code of 1897* made very few changes in the property rights of married women. The legislature in 1913, however, passed an act which gave the entire estate of the husband who had no children to the widow if its value was under \$7500. The estate in excess of this amount was to be divided between the wife and the parents. The same rule applied to the husband's share in the wife's estate.²²⁴

This means that widows had further access to financial resources such as the estate of their deceased husband (“Property Right”)

Conclusion

Throughout the first part of the 20th century, the United States was a haven for change in the case of women's rights. Women were gaining more access to different industries to work in, getting better wages, receiving custody of children after divorce, and holding property rights. The passing of the 19th Amendment further impacted this process and helped spearhead the acceleration of women's rights that continue to this day. In 1900 and 1920 respectively, women's rights in America was making progress at its base and looking toward future summits.

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