

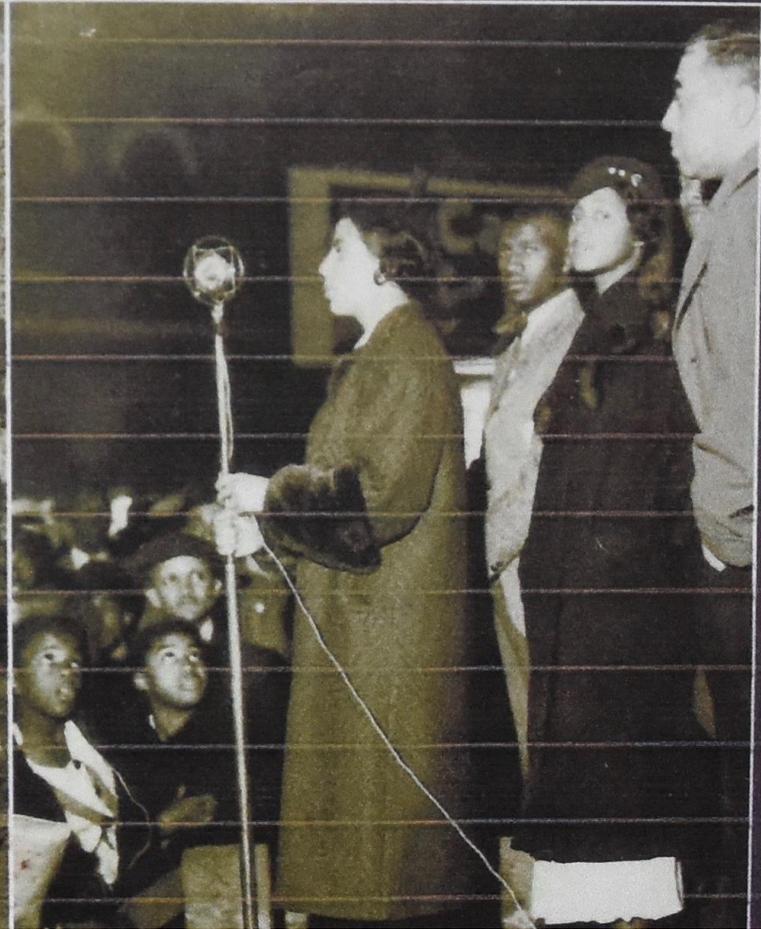
Women in the Law: A Historical Perspective



HON. DIANE O. LEASURE (RET.)

Finding Justice Book Project

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A History of Women Lawyers Since 1642



- The project began in 2006 when the Honorable Lynne A. Battaglia of the Court of Appeals recruited a small group of attorneys, judges, and scholars to explore the idea of publishing a literary work on the history of women in the law in Maryland during the time period of 1642 to 1974.
- Judge Battaglia's dream became a reality with the publication of *Finding Justice* in 2015. Judge Battaglia is the Editor of the book which includes chapters authored by six other women.
- The book also includes first-person interviews with female members of the bar.

The Colonial Days – Women Attorneys-in-Fact

Married Women

- ❖ Were considered to be one entity with their husbands.
- ❖ Could not own property, make a will, sue or be sued.
- ❖ When a married woman appeared in court, she was there only as her husband's representative or with his permission.

Single Women

- ❖ Regularly appeared in court, representing other's interests and/or presenting their own matters.
- ❖ Could own their own property.
- ❖ Could speak for themselves in court or for others.
- ❖ Margaret Brent was appointed attorney to Lord Baltimore and administratrix to the deceased Governor Leonard Calvert in 1647.

A conjectural charcoal drawing of Margaret Brent by Edwin Tinis, ca 1932

Courtesy of the Maryland State Archive

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Etta Maddox

Maryland's First Woman Lawyer



- Born in 1860.
- Had a successful music career as an accomplished vocalist prior to attending law school.
- Was 40 years old when she began law school at Baltimore Law School.
- Graduated from law school in 1901 (one of 13 graduates) and was the first woman to do so.
- Even though she graduated from law school, not permitted to be admitted to practice law since that privilege was only accorded to men.

Etta Maddox's Advocacy for Women to be Admitted to the Maryland Bar



- She petitioned the Court of Appeals for permission to take the Maryland Bar Examination – her petition was denied.
- She presented her case to the Legislature and the Bill to permit women to be admitted to the Maryland Bar passed the Senate and the House of Delegates in 1902.
- Governor John W. Smith signed the Bill into law on April 8, 1902.
- Etta Maddox took the bar examination in 1902 and passed – becoming the first woman admitted to practice law in the State of Maryland.

Photograph of Etta Maddox in Margie H. Lockett, *Maryland Women*, Vol. 2

Courtesy of the Maryland State Archives

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THE JOURNEY CONTINUES

The Impact of Mentoring and Other Influences on Career Development



- In the post World War II era through 1974, formal mentoring programs for female lawyers were virtually non-existent.
- One name that is synonymous with mentoring is Jeanette Rosner Wolman, who was admitted to the Maryland Bar in 1924.
- She and six other women formed what would eventually become the Women's Bar Association of Maryland.
- They joined together in 1927, after the exclusively male Maryland State Bar Association refused admittance to four of the seven members of this group.

Mentoring (cont'd)



- The Maryland State Bar Association remained the last bar association that excluded women for membership until 1946, when Rose Zetzer, a Women's Bar Association member, was finally admitted to its membership ranks.
- Jeanette Rosner Wolman mentored many women attorneys. Her positive impact on women attorneys was acknowledged in 1991 when she was named as one of the first recipients of the American Bar Association's prestigious Margaret Brent Women Lawyers of Achievement Award.

Jeanette Rosner Wolman

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