MINNESOTA - 1878
Martha Angle Dorsett
Martha Dorsett received her law degree from Iowa College of Law. When she and her husband, who had also graduated with a degree in law, moved to Minneapolis and applied for admission to the bar, her husband’s application was quickly approved. The judge who reviewed Martha’s application said she lacked only one statutory qualification: she was female. The judge continued, saying that “the work which the wives and mothers of our land reform, and the part they are to take in training and educating the young, and which none other can do so well, for bids that they shall bestow that time and labor, so essential in attaining to the eminence to which the true lawyer should ever aspire.” Dorsett finally was admitted to the bar in 1878 and practiced with her husband for 10 years. She and her husband were frustrated by the special interest politics in Minnesota and both stopped practicing law in the late 1880’s. Dorsett developed an interest in the suffrage and prohibition movements.

IOWA - 1869 - Belle Mansfield
Belle Mansfield, at the age of 23, became the first officially recognized lawyer in the United States. After graduating from Ohio Wesleyan College, she joined her brother’s law firm and began an apprenticeship in law. The following year she formally applied for the Iowa bar examination, despite statutory provisions limiting admission to “white males.” Mansfield was permitted to take the examination, passed and was formally admitted to the bar. Mansfield never practiced law, preferring instead to teach at Iowa Wesleyan. She was one of the founders of the Iowa Women’s Suffrage Society and a popular lecturer for women’s rights.

MISSOURI - 1870
Lemma Barkaloo
Lemma Barkaloo was first female law student as well as the first woman to try a case in court. After being rejected by both Columbia and Harvard, she enrolled at Washington University in St. Louis and after her examination, was admitted to the Supreme Court of Missouri. She never finished law school, deciding to begin a practice instead. However, Barkaloo died of typhoid fever on a few months later.

ILLINOIS - 1872
Alta M. Hulett
While Myra Bradwell’s case was on appeal to the United States Supreme Court, Alta Hulett applied for admission to the Illinois bar. She was denied. Hulett decided to take her case to the legislature and drafted a bill providing that no person be discriminated against in any occupation, except the military, on account of sex. With Bradwell’s assistance, Hulett succeeded in getting her bill passed and became the first woman lawyer in Illinois.

MICHIGAN - 1871
Sarah Kilgore
Sarah Kilgore was the second woman in the United States to receive her law degree, having graduated from University of Michigan. Kilgore became the third woman lawyer in the United States. Kilgore practiced law with her husband together in Michigan. After withdrawing from the profession for a short time, Kilgore schooled her three daughters while working full time at her practice.

Indiana - 1875
Elizabeth Eaglesfield
Elizabeth Eaglesfield graduated from University of Michigan’s School of Law, and was admitted to the bar in Indiana under a law that provided admittance to “every person of good moral character, being a voter.” She practiced in both Terre Haute and Indianapolis, but eventually moved back to Michigan to practice in Grand Rapids.

OHIO - 1873
Nettie Cronise Lutes
Nettie Cronise was admitted to the bar in Ohio in April, 1873, and her sister Florence a few months later. Nettie soon married N.B. Lutes, an attorney who had passed the bar at the same time as she. Nettie and her sister had a practice together until 1880, when Nettie set up a practice with her husband. By the late 1880s, Nettie’s husband was totally deaf, and she carried on the bulk of their practice by herself. Mr. Lutes praised his wife and her sister at the time, writing, “They have won their standing at the bar solely upon their merits as lawyers, in everyday practice, and the fact that the are women seems to have been almost lost sight of, so far as their practice is concerned; and this, I think is as is should be.” Nettie Lutes also home schooled her three daughters while working full time at her practice.

WISCONSIN - 1874 - Lavinia Goodell
Although Lavinia Goodell was admitted to the Circuit Court of Rock County, Wisconsin, the Supreme Court of the state refused her admission. This decision, made by a Chief Justice Edward Ryan, illuminated the view held by many male lawyers in the late 19th century. After the state legislature passed a law allowing women to practice in Wisconsin, C.J. Ryan dissented from the court’s decision to admit Goodell. He said, “The law of nature destines and qualifies the female sex for the bearing and nurturing of the children of our race and for the custody of the homes of the world and their maintenance in love and honor. And all lifelong callings of women, inconsistent with the radical and sacred duties of their sex, as is the profession of the law, are departures from the order of nature; and when voluntary, treason against it.”

Ryan said that he wanted to protect her gender from “all the nastiness of the world which finds its way into courts of justice; all the unclean issues, all the collateral questions, of sodomy incest, rape, seduction fornication, adultery, pregnancy, bastardy, legitimacy, prostitution, lascivious cohabitation, abortion, infanticide, obscene publication, libel and slander of sex, impotence, divorce—and all the nameless indecencies.” Despite Ryan’s castigations, fellow female lawyers respected Goodell as an able and hard working lawyer. She died in 1880.
Mountain States

MONTANA - 1890 - Ella Knowles Haskell
Along with her work as a lawyer, Ella Haskell was active in Montana politics, at one point standing for election as attorney general of Montana. She lost by only a few votes. Soon afterward, she married her Republican opponent and was appointed assistant attorney general. Haskell specialized in real estate, closing several large mining deals in the early 1900’s. She was also respected as a mining engineer, and often enjoyed “donning a heavy rubber coat and boots and [being] lowered down into a mine to inspect it. She strongly advocated women’s suffrage.

WYOMING - 1899
Grace Raymond Hebard
Passing the Wyoming state bar was only one of Hebard’s many accomplishments. Hebard attended Iowa State University, majoring in civil engineering. While her enrollment in these all male classes was discouraged, she began working in the United States Surveyor’s Office in Cheyenne a month after graduation. In 1891, Hebard joined the board of trustees at University of Wyoming, and according to her fellow trustees, practically usurped the duties of the president — hiring and firing faculty, setting policies, and supervising the physical structure of the university. Hebard also led a dynamic teaching career, instructing students in everything from international law to children’s literature, serving as university librarian and as head of the department of political economy. She was also state officer for the Daughters of the American Revolution and the Wyoming state tennis champion (both singles and doubles.) She declared, “Hard work is the only formula for achievement.”

COLORADO - 1891
Mary S. Thomas
Mary Thomas and her husband applied for the bar at the same time in 1891. Both were certified as mentally and physically fit. He was admitted two days later, but Mary Thomas was denied, and she had to petition the bar. She was finally admitted six months later, but it took six years for the Colorado legislature to pass a law allowing women to become lawyers.

NEW MEXICO - 1917
Katherine Burns Mabry
A teacher in Clovis, New Mexico, Katherine Burns Mabry studied law on the side, interested in New Mexico’s process of becoming a state. When she married future governor of New Mexico, Thomas J. Mabry, and he passed the bar, she was inspired to continue her legal studies. Katherine Mabry was admitted to the bar before the New Mexico Supreme Court in 1917. According to her daughter, it was “never Katherine’s plan to practice law - she enjoyed the challenge of studying for and passing the bar.” A reserved person, Mabry was not a suffragette. She said she preferred to leave the “fighting and voting to men.” Toward the end of her life, Mabry suffered from poor health and two broken hips, which confined her to a wheelchair. Her husband served as governor for two terms, beginning in 1946. During this time Katherine Mabry wrote a column for state newspapers titled “New Mexico Notes from a Wheelchair.”

OKLAHOMA - 1898
Laura Lykins
Laura Lykins came from a Cherokee Indian family that was extremely politically active. She passed the bar in 1898.

NEBRASKA - 1881 - Ada Matilde Cole Bittenbender
Ada Bittenbender studied law under her husband’s supervision and was admitted to the bar in 1882. Together they opened a legal partnership, and while many women in partnerships with their husbands took care of office duties while their husbands went to court, Ada Bittenbender had an active court practice. She became a leader for the Women’s Christian Temperance Union and was named its national attorney. She became the third woman admitted to the bar of the US Supreme Court.

KANSAS - 1881
J.M. Kellogg
J.M. Kellogg studied law in his husband’s office in Emporia, Kansas and was admitted to the bar of the Supreme Court in 1881. She and her husband formed a law practice together. When Mr. Kellogg was chosen as Attorney General for Kansas, she was appointed as chief clerk, assistant to the Attorney General.

SOUTH DAKOTA - 111 - Blanche Coleman
Blanche Coleman was the first woman to be admitted to the state bar in South Dakota. When Coleman was only 10 years old, a fire destroyed her family’s home. However, she still made it to school on time that morning; she didn’t want to mar her record of perfect attendance and punctuality.

When Blanche Coleman graduated from high school, a newly elected congressman, William Parker took her to Washington to be his secretary. However she soon returned home, liking the Black Hills of South Dakota better than the big city. She began to study law in the local attorney’s office of Chambers Kellar, and at 27 years old, without ever going to college or law school, passed the South Dakota Bar examination. She continued to work for Kellar, assisting him in water rights and labor litigation of the largest gold mines in the country, the Homestake Mine. One attorney was known to have said of her, “We all envied [Chambers Kellar] having a top-notch legal expert doing his homework backstage - Blanche Coleman. She was especially good in probate and handled all of the business for Kellar in probate court When she pushed back her glasses on her forehead and got that look in her sharp eyes, you knew she was solving a knotty legal problem.”
NEW HAMPSHIRE - 1890 - 
Marilla M. Ricker
Marilla Ricker was first admitted to the District of Columbia bar in 1882 after studying in a law office for four years. There she became a successful trial lawyer. Known as “the prisoner’s friend,” she specialized in defending criminals. When she returned to her home in Dover, New Hampshire, she applied to the bar and was admitted before the Supreme Court.

MAINE - 1872
Clara H. Nash
Clara Nash studied for three years in her husband’s office, and after her admission to the state bar by the Supreme Court of Maine in 1872, they practiced together in Portland, Maine. Nash later moved to Boston and practiced in Massachusetts.

VERMONT - 1914 - 
Ellen M. M. Hoar
Ellen Hoar was inspired as a child by her father, Richard Hoar, an established attorney. She studied the Columbia Law Review and the Vermont Statutes. Her hunger for learning extended beyond law. She was a talented pianist, organist, and actress and participated in several Vermont musical productions. She was also an avid sports woman and in 1909 led her high school women’s basketball team to win the state championship. Ellen Hoar graduated from University of Maine Law School in 1914. She went on to work in her father’s practice, and helped him solve the infamous Parker-Long murder case, where a woman of ill-repute had been strangled. Long, the woman’s killer, was sentenced to life imprisonment. Hoar practiced law for ten years, eventually giving up law when her father died. She devoted herself to community affairs, including the Red Cross and the Legion Auxiliary.

NEW YORK - 1886 - 
Kate Stoneman
Kate Stoneman received her law degree from Union University in New York. Although she passed her admission to the bar, when she applied to the Supreme Court, she was refused, because no precedent had been set for women to be admitted. A bill was soon passed in the New York legislature, and Stoneman was admitted to the bar.

Pennsylvania - 1886
Carrie Burnham Kilgore
Carrie Kilgore began fighting for admission to the bar in Philadelphia in 1872. She was refused several times and tried to sue the Board of Examiners to get the legislature to pass a law admitting women. She attempted admission in several different courts, ending up in the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania, where she was finally admitted in 1886. She worked in her husband’s firm when she first began practicing. When he died, all his former clients requested that she take up all of his current cases. Kilgore was twice appointed Master by the court system and acted as the solicitor for several corporations.

West Virginia - 1896
Agnes Westbrook Morrison
Agnes Westbrook Morrison graduated from the West Virginia University College of Law, its first woman graduate. She passed the bar in 1896 and practiced law in Wheeling, West Virginia with her husband. She was an organizer of women’s clubs and civic and religious organizations.

Maryland - 1902
Etta Haynie Madox
After attending Peabody Conservatory of Music and becoming an accomplished mezzo soprano, Etta Madox entered Baltimore Law School and earned her degree in 1901. Because she was prohibited from practicing, she pushed for and succeeded in helping pass a bill that open the practice of law in Maryland to women. She soon passed the bar, and as a lawyer Madox founded the Maryland Suffrage Association.

Connecticut - 1882 - 
Mary Hall
Mary Hall’s desire to become a lawyer was kindled when she traveled to Hartford for her first women’s suffrage convention at the age of 38. There she heard activist John Hooker explain the restrictive property rights of married women. Hall’s enthusiasm influenced her brother Ezra to allow her to study law in his office, and when he died, Hall went to work for John Hooker in his law office. Mary passed her bar exam, and the Connecticut Supreme Court upheld her right to be an attorney. She spent much of her time handling wills and property matters for women. Hall died in 1927.

Rhode Island - 1920
Ada Louis Sawyer
Born in Providence, Rhode Island in 1892, Ada Louis Sawyer studied law in the office of Percy Gardner, where she worked as a stenographer. She was also the president of the Rhode Island State Federation of Women’s clubs. She fought against the lobby for gambling and liquor interests and was offered a post as assistant district attorney but declined because it took time away from her practice.

Delaware - 1923
Sybil Ward
Sybil Ward attended Wheaton College in Massachusetts, graduating in 1894. She went to University of Pennsylvania at Philadelphia for law school, class of 1923. She worked in Wilmington in her husband’s firm.

District of Columbia - 1872
Charlotte E. Ray
Charlotte Ray also has the distinction of being the first African American woman lawyer admitted to a state bar. She was admitted to Howard Law School by applying as “C.E. Ray.” There was some commotion when Howard realized she was a woman, but she was allowed to continue her courses. Ray was the first admitted Phi Beta Kappa. Despite Ray’s intelligence and legal prowess, however, no client would retain her due to the racism and sexism of the time.

New Jersey - 1892 - 
Mary Philbrook
Mary Philbrook grew interested in law when she worked as a secretary in two different law offices. When Philbrook applied for the bar in 1894 and was refused solely on the basis of her gender, she joined the crusaders in the New Jersey Woman Suffrage Association to lobby the New Jersey legislature for a law specifically enabling women to be admitted to the bar. When admitted in 1895, Philbrook set up her practice in Jersey City but soon moved to Newark. There she organized a juvenile court system and worked in the women’s reform movement. Her aid gave her public attention, and from this she built up a large and prosperous practice. Philbrook went for a brief time in 1919 to Washington, where she participated in some of the militant demonstrations of the National Women’s Party. She grew too radical for many of her co-feminists, and her demand for equal working conditions made her less popular. She lost in her bid of counsel of the city of Newark. In the 1940s (at the age of 72) Philbrook renewed her campaign of an equal rights amendment to the New Jersey Constitution, again organizing a lobby for it.

Virginia - 1892 - 
Belva Lockwood
Belva Lockwood was also the first woman admitted to the federal bar. She graduated from National University Law School in 1873 and was successful at practicing law, earning as much as $300 monthly - an enormous sum for a lawyer to be making in the last decades of the 19th century. The first woman lawyer to argue a case before the Supreme Court, Lockwood obtained a $5 million settlement for the Cherokee nation after having filed massive claims on behalf of the nation against the U.S. government. She was also a passionate suffragist. She once said, “If I stopped fighting. My cause was the case of thousands of women.”
**TENNESSEE - 1907**

Marian S. Griffin

Marian Griffin first worked as a stenographer, but she became interested in legal work as she watched the lawyers that she worked for. In 1900, she was allowed to practice in the Circuit Court in Tennessee, but the Supreme Court refused to admit her. Eventually the state legislature passed an act allowing women to be admitted to the bar. Griffin’s first case involved a runaway train car that killed a young calf; she was the prosecutor for the farmer against the railroad company. She won the case, and when it was appealed, she won again in Circuit Court. The farmer was paid $50 for damages for his dead calf.

Griffin was also a member of the House of Representatives from 1923 to 1925. She practiced in Memphis until her retirement in 1949.

**ARKANSAS - 1918**

Sarah Shields Jobe

Sarah Jobe was admitted to the bar Jan. 28, 1918. In her first lawsuit, the opposing counsel was T.C. Jobe, whom she married immediately afterward. He was then elected to the U.S. senate, and the two moved to Washington together. She did not continue her practice.

**TEXAS - 1910**

Hortense Sparks

Malcolm Ward

Hortense Ward began her law career as a court stenographer after she and her first husband divorced in 1906. Sharing an office with a firm of lawyers, she began to study law by correspondence courses. In 1909, she remarried to a Houston lawyer, William Henry Ward, and soon afterward to took and passed pressure. Lucy Greaves, a woman from Gulfport, Mississippi, was one of the women to benefit from this freedom; she passed the bar in 1914.

**MISSISSIPPI - 1914**

Lucy H. Greaves

The advent of World War I freed up many women and blacks from long-established social pressure. Lucy Greaves, a woman from Gulfport, Mississippi, was one of the women to benefit from this freedom; she passed the bar in 1914.

**LOUISIANA - 1898**

Betty Runnells

Betty Runnells graduated from Tulane University in Louisiana on June 1, 1898, with a law degree and was admitted to the bar to practice law in Louisiana.

**ALABAMA - 1907**

Luelle Lamar Allen

Luelle Allen passed the bar on June 6, 1907. She was from Goodwater county, south of Birmingham, Alabama.

**FLORIDA - 1908**

Louise R. Pinnell

Pinnell practiced law with her father - also a judge - and her brother for three years. She then became a member of the Florida East Coast Railway and Flagler System law department. Pinnell represented Florida in the National Association of Women Lawyers, organized in 1899, and served as State Vice President of that organization from 1938 to 1939.

**KENTUCKY - 1892**

Sophonisba Breckinridge

Sophonisba Breckinridge was born in 1866 to a distinguished Kentucky family in Lexington. She tried to practice in Lexington, but she had very few clients. Later, she went to University of Chicago and earned a law degree and doctorate in political science. She served as dean and director of research at the Chicago School of Civics and Philanthropy, helping to orchestrate that school’s merger with the University of Chicago. She was president of the American Association of Schools of Social Work.

**SOUTH CAROLINA - 1918**

James Perry

Originally from Greenville, South Carolina, Miss James Perry went to California to earn her law degree. Perry practiced in California until South Carolina passed a law in 1918 permitting women to pass the bar. The bill had been strenuously opposed in the South Carolina legislature. One assemblyman had thought that “it was unjust to the men that women should enter into competition with them.” He believed that the chances of his two sons, who were studying to become lawyers, would be significantly lessened by having women in the profession.

Perry worked as a corporation counselor, going from clerk to partner at a South Carolina firm. The Spartanburg Herald-Journal, the local newspaper, reported that when she was introduced to the bar, everyone present at the meeting “extended to her the glad hand of fellowship by rising and applauding.”

**GEORGIA - 1916**

Betty Reynolds Cobb

Betty Cobb, along with another woman, Mary C. Johnson, did not gain admission to the Georgia bar until 1916. Most other states already had already admitted more than 50 women. At the time she said she perceived a deep hostility against women lawyers in Georgia and to the woman’s movement in general. “I do not think our section of the country is ready, quite yet to make ‘easy sailing’ for a woman lawyer.” Cobb, however, described her office practice as “pleasant and reasonably remunerative.”

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WASHINGTON - 1884 - Mary A. Leonard

Probably one of the most notorious pioneer women attorneys, Mary Leonard was the first women lawyer in both Oregon and Washington. She was a Swiss immigrant who moved to the Northwest territory after the Civil War. Her two-year marriage ended in a bitter divorce. Her ex-husband, who refused to honor a court order for providing support, was found dead from a gunshot wound. Leonard was charged but acquitted of murder. She then inherited David Leonard’s estate, became financially solvent, and decided to study law. She passed the Washington bar in 1884, then subsequently moved to Portland, Oregon, where she practiced for about a year, then retired due to bad health.

IDAHO - 1895 - Helen S. Young

Originally from the town of Osburn in Northern Idaho, Helen Young began practicing law in 1885. She took and passed the state bar in 1895. (Idaho did not become a state until 1890.)

OREGON - 1885

CALIFORNIA - 1849-1934

Clara Shortridge Foltz

Daughter of an Indiana lawyer who campaigned for Abraham Lincoln, Clara Shortridge Foltz began her path to a legal career at age fifteen as a school teacher in Illinois. Soon thereafter, she eloped with a Pennsylvania Dutchman named Jeremiah Foltz and bore five children with him. In 1874, she and her family moved to San Jose, California. However, shortly after moving to California, she and Jeremiah divorced.

To support her family, Clara lectured on topics including suffrage and equal rights for women. Her lecturing was so popular and she became so active in the community that she actually helped establish San Jose’s first paid fire department. However, as the daughter of a lawyer, Clara’s interests turned to law. In order to fulfill her goal to practice law, Clara applied for apprenticeships with countless lawyers, all male of course. All but C.C. Stephens met her job requests with condescension and comments that a woman’s place is in the home.

After gaining much experience and a reputation as a solid trial lawyer, Clara decided that she should receive formal training in order to better serve her clients. Accordingly, Clara applied for law school at Hastings. She was summarily denied admission on groundsthat the rustling of her petticoats would distract the students. But that did not stop Clara. In fact, she attended classes at Hastings until the janitor threw her out. Two years later, after Clara has already been admitted to the California bar, the California Supreme Court, in Foltz v. Hoge, held that Hastings could not deny admission based upon gender. Clara had won, but she did not receive a degree from Hastings until 1990 when Hastings conferred and honorary degree upon her.

HAWAII - 1888

Alameda Eliza Hitchcock

Born in 1863, Alameda Eliza Hitchcock graduated from University of Michigan’s School of Law in 1887. She returned to Hawaii and joined her father’s practice in Oahu. The firm served many rural clients and she would often ride more than 200 miles to meet them and argue cases. Hitchcock was also one of the starting members in the Equity Club, a legal association founded in 1886 by women lawyers at University of Michigan to help support the small number of women lawyers across America and to develop a sense of professional community.

Note: Several sources list Sarah Herrin Sorin as the first woman lawyer in Arizona. (SLS)

ARIZONA - 1903

Vivian Hopson

Born in Massachusetts, Vivian Hopson soon moved out West, where she passed the bar in 1898 in the state of Washington. She moved south to Arizona, where she continued her law practice in Phoenix. She enrolled in the Bar Association there in 1903.

ALASKA - 1934 Mildred Robinson Hermann

In addition to being the first woman lawyer in the state of Alaska, Mildred Hermann was a writer and a radio commentator and was instrumental in the movement for Alaska statehood. She immigrated to Alaska from Indiana in 1913 and taught school until 1920. She studied law with a judge in Juneau, and took courses by correspondence. After passing the bar in 1934, she had a private practice until 1942. Hermann served as the secretary of the Alaska Statehood commission, preparing a definitive analysis of the economic impact of statehood. When she testified in the U.S. Senate hearings on Alaskan statehood, her pleasant disposition and poise led one senator to say she was the best witness he had ever seen. In her later life, Hermann wrote articles for the Anchorage Times about the state legislature.

NEVADA - 1893

Laura Tilden Ray Wilson

Born in California, Laura Tilden was the first woman lawyer in Nevada to pass the bar. At the age of 21, Tilden pushed the Nevada legislature to pass a law giving women the same rights and privileges as males “so far as becoming attorneys is concerned. The next year she passed the bar and received “encomiums from the entire bench for the manner in which she presented herself.” She soon moved to Sacramento, California and was father’s law partner in his office. Tilden worked as a local suffrage leader and as a public notary. She also practiced in Denver, Colorado.

UTAH - 1872

Phoebe W. Couzins

Along with Lemma Barkaloo, Phoebe Couzins attended Washington University in St. Louis and was its first woman graduate. She was admitted to the practice in the courts of Missouri, Kansas and Utah, as well as the federal courts. For a time, Couzins also served as United States Marshal, completing her father’s unfinished term. She was a passionate suffragist and stood with Susan B. Anthony in Philadelphia to present the Declaration of Women’s Rights. Couzins, herself white, was also an outspoken advocate of equal rights for African Americans.
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*Information for this table was obtained from a search of the literature, state bar associations, state court administrators and other local authorities. The author welcomes corrections and additional information.

**Territorial judge

Note: Several sources list Sarah Herring Sorin as the first woman lawyer in Arizona. (SLS)