

The content of women's legal practices

The Woman's Journal makes infrequent mention of the content of women's law practices. Stories are more about the novelty of their admission to law school and the bar and about their male-connectedness. Most mentions of legal cases are the women's own in seeking admission to the bar. The few exceptions (from the "Women Lawyers--General" folder) follow:

* This tantalizing story refers to an apparently important case without discussing what it was about: "Detroit's woman lawyer--Mrs. Martha Strickland--has recently won a case in the Supreme Court of Michigan which has been closely contested for two years, and which all acknowledge would have been lost but for her faithful and skilful [sic] efforts in behalf of her client. As often as defeated in the lower court she applied to the Supreme Court for relief, and has won three successive victories, the case finally terminating in her favor. Evidently the proverbial feminine desire for the 'last word' is a quality that may be used to advantage in the practice of the law!"
WJ, 1/18/1890, at 18, col. 1.

* Mrs. Ada M. Bittenbender of Lincoln, Neb., on the day, Aug. 17, 1883, that she was admitted to practice in the Supreme Court of Nebraska, "applied to that court for a writ of mandamus to compel a town board to hear remonstrances before granting saloon licenses under the Slocumb law. This was the first case under the law, and as she won her point, it established a precedent which has been followed ever since. From 1884 to 1889, she was the superintendent of legislation and petitions of the Nebraska W.C.T.U., and aided in securing the passage of the scientific temperance instruction bill, the law giving the mother equally with the father the guardianship of her children, the law raising the age of protection for girls from twelve to fifteen years, and other important measures. . . . Court practice is more to her liking than office work. She is a prohibitionist and a suffragist. She is an ardent advocate of anti-monopoly and ballot reform . . ."
WJ, 7/12/1890, at 218, col. 1.

* "Mrs. Marilla M. Ricker, of Dover, N.H., . . . expects to appear before the courts of New Hampshire in several important suits to be brought testing the legal rights of her sex, . . ."
WJ, 8/2/1890, at 241, col. 3.

* Mrs. Mary B. Bryan, who had never practiced law "and has no intention of doing so": "When asked what branch of the law she felt most interest in, she replied, 'Domestic Relations,' and added, pointing to the girl and boy who are her constant companions, 'with special attention at present to the relation existing between parent and child.'"
WJ, 7/12/1890, at 218, col. 1-2.