



BUFFALO B P W
THROUGH THE YEARS . . .
1933 - 1997

"It is important to remember that men were suffragists, too. The suffrage movement both included men as supporters and depended on the votes that only men could cast."

"To get the word *male*...out of the Constitution cost the women of this country 52 years of pauseless campaigning...

During that time they were forced to conduct:

- 56 campaigns of referenda to male voters;
- 480 campaigns to get Legislatures to submit suffrage amendments to voters;
- 47 campaigns to get State constitutional conventions to write woman suffrage into state constitutions;
- 277 campaigns to get State party conventions to include woman suffrage planks;
- 30 campaigns to get presidential party conventions to adopt woman suffrage planks in party platforms, and
- 19 campaigns with 19 successive Congresses."

Buffalo Courier Express - October 9, 1938
Editorial

The controversy over the competition of women for men's jobs goes on and on. The Biggers unemployment survey showed 2,740,000 more women seeking work than had been anticipated on the basis of the 1930 census.

"Women are not stealing men's jobs", is the reply to the Biggers report made by Miss Earlene White, president of the Business and Professional Womens Club in a letter to President Roosevelt. She tells the President that "any government attitude against working women as a cause of a glut in the labor market undoubtedly will cause hardships on the millions of women who work to support themselves". She adds, "The implication is that women are to blame for the unemployment which exists among men by competing with them for jobs, rather than the opposite and true picture, which is that the depression has forced millions of women to work because men were no longer able to be the breadwinners".

January 20, 1941 meeting of Buffalo BPW

The January 20, 1941 meeting of Buffalo BPW discussed the survey conducted by Marjorie Fiske, field consultant of the International Federation of Business and Professional Womens Clubs. She presented the preliminary findings of a survey from seven representative communities in New York State (Tarrytown, Poughkeepsie, Binghamton, Norwich, Albany, Utica and Buffalo).

Points stressed in the New York report were:

1. Business and professional women are in a position to influence community opinion.
 2. They should cooperate with other groups, to exchange ideas and programs.
 3. It is their duty to keep informed on community problems.
 4. Business and professional women should stop being timid and realize their potential power.
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Buffalo Courier Express - March 23, 1941

Business and Professional Club has Goal of 500 members

Today the club has an enrollment of 108 members. The club was founded in 1933 and the first officers were Dr. Helen Dwight Reid of the University of Buffalo-president, Miss May C. Sickmon-Vice President, Miss Rose Spack - Treasurer, Miss Rhoda V. Lewis-Recording Secretary, and Mrs. Mary L. Capers-Corresponding Secretary. Other Charter members included Mrs. J. Sterling Dean, Miss Eunice Trim, Miss Esther McCutcheon, Mrs. Evidge Fischer, Miss Nellie Sullivan, Miss Inez Stearns, Miss Ruth Evans, Miss Tess Sedweek, Miss Elizabeth Moran, and Miss Zaidee Rodgers.

From the start, the women affiliated with the National Federation of Business and Professional Women's Clubs. Following a self-investigating survey to discover what clubwomen can do to make democracy work and what changes are needed to achieve more effective club programs, the local club focused on:

1. clubs make sure their own organization is democratic; and
 2. more action be taken on important civic problems with less emphasis on purely social affairs.
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September 28, 1943

Thomas J. Watson, Guest Speaker at Dinner

"We are today in the midst of the greatest crisis we have ever faced, and I feel we are well on our way to defining policies to meet this emergency" declared Thomas J. Watson, president of the International Business Machines Corporation, who was guest speaker at the formal dinner and closing session of the two-day State Convention of the Business and Professional Women's Clubs at the IBM Homestead, with Miss Frances K. Marlatt, State President, presiding.

Pointing out that there are now 1,750,000 women working in our industries, doing jobs never before done by women, and in many cases, never done by men, Mr. Watson said that men must begin to consider women and train them for jobs to replace

vacancies left by enlistments in the armed forces. "A proposed 17 million men in the field.....leaves a tremendous gap that can only be filled by women" he said.

Illustrating his point about women in war industries, Mr. Watson said that in the aircraft industry which never until now employed women, there were 2,000 women working in January of this year (1943) and 25,000 women in July. In machine tool industries, where precision work is demanded, already 15% of those employed are women, with the percentage expected to jump to 50% within six-to-eight months. One new plant in Chicago, he said, now has 82% women workers and they expect to raise that to 90% within the year. Seated at the speaker's table with Mr. Watson was M. Davina Johnston, State Corresponding Secretary, from Buffalo BPW.

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October 17, 1950: (news source unknown)

May C. Sickmon - was proclaimed the BPW's 1950 Buffalo Outstanding Business Woman for National Business Womens Week.

May C. Sickmon was a graduate of Cornell University's Law School and one of five women in the United States to hold the important position of U.S. District Court Clerk. Miss Sickmon was an ardent crusader for equal rights for women and women's suffrage. She was one of the early founders of the Business & Professional Women of Buffalo, and one of the drafters of the first constitution of the Erie County Girl Scouts. Miss Sickmon has always crusaded for more educational opportunities for girls and young women who cannot afford to help themselves financially.

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Buffalo Evening News - Editorial- October 5, 1955
Women at Work

We cannot let National Business Women's Week go by without doffing our hat to the gals we all unwittingly slight when we speak of this nation's great resource of manpower. Womanpower, especially that of our business and professional women, is not only a mightly important but still growing force in our economy. There are few fields indeed that women have not yet entered and mastered.

The wonder is that so many of those women not only hold down challenging jobs, but find time to carry on the additional duties of mothers and housewives.

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Buffalo Evening News - September 11, 1957 Hundreds Hear Judge Mikoll Welcomed to City Court"

"I have been impressed by the ability, integrity and industry you have shown," Chief Justice John W. Ryan Jr. told her. "It is awfully nice to have you with us as a judge," as the 28 year old former attorney in the City Law Department, who prosecuted many city cases in City court, was greeted by Leo Winer, Chairman of the Erie County Bar Association Committee on Courts of Inferior Jurisdiction.

Judge Mikoll said, " I intend to discharged my duty with dignity, with the intelligence at my command, with impartiality and with the awareness of human frailty." It was one of the largest receptions ever given a new judge.

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**Buffalo Evening News - August 1, 1960
Mrs. Helen Zaidee M. Rodgers dies"**

Mrs. Helen Z. M. Rodgers, distinguished Buffalo Attorney who was one of the first two women graduated from the University of Buffalo Law School died today in Millard Fillmore Hospital. An early believer in "Women's Rights", Mrs. Rodgers was a pioneer woman suffragist in Western

New York and marched in parades at a time when the cause was not a popular one. She was the first woman lawyer to try a case before the State Court of Appeals. She had been admitted to practice before the United States Supreme Court.

Elected delegate to the 1938 Constitutional Convention from the 48th Senate District, Mrs. Rodgers was honored by being the only woman appointed to head a committee. She was Chairman of the Committee on Suffrage and Qualifications for Office, and the only woman ever to preside over a Constitutional Convention in the state. She ran for representative-at-large on the Republican ticket during a Roosevelt year (1938) and was defeated.

Mrs. Rodgers graduated from University of Buffalo Law School at the head of her class. As an active worker for woman suffrage, she was a charter member of the Buffalo Political Equity Club, president of the Women Workers Suffrage League and a Vice Chairman of the Woman Suffrage Party of Erie County in 1917, when New York women won the right to vote. She was also a member of the Business and Professional Women of Buffalo.

In 1949 the Business and Professional Women's Club named Mrs. Rodgers as Buffalo's Outstanding Business Woman in recognition of her many years of outstanding

achievements and unselfish devotion in advancing the interests of women in business, the professions, and public life. In 1958 she was the recipient of the fourth annual Susan B. Anthony Award. Her designation read: An outstanding woman who not only is worthy of the award, but is a challenge and example to all women.

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November 1967

"Local attorney, Mrs. Alfreda W. Slominski, running as a candidate for Councilman-at-Large for the city, won with the highest vote in the city. Prior to being elected to the Buffalo City Council, Alfreda served on the Board of Education for 5 years. She graduated from the University of Bufflao Law School in 1952, and was employed by the Central Intelligence Agency in Washington, D.C."

P.S. Alfreda climaxed her political career as Erie County Comptroller from 1975-1993.

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BPW in the '70's

The 1970's were primarily dominated by the effort to have the Equal Rights Amendment (E.R.A.) ratified.

1970: At a BPW Legislative Conference, Senator Birch Bayh (Democrat - Indiana), announces that the first formal E.R.A. hearings in the Senate, in a dozen years, will be held in May. At the hearings, BPW President Myra Ruth Harmon is the first witness to testify on behalf of the E.R.A. after members of Congress speak. The E.R.A. passes the House of Representatives.

On March 22, 1972, the E.R.A. passes the Senate, and by the end of the year, the total exceeds 30 states who have ratified.

1973 BPW establishes an E.R.A. Ratification Fund with a goal of \$250,000. In just thirty minutes, members attending the Miami Beach National BPW Convention give \$10,000 in personal contributions.

FROM AN ARTICLE IN THE TONAWANDA NEWS, OCT 30, 1975:

"BPW Women's Clubs of New York State made a major effort in voter education on the E.R.A. on Saturday. November 1, 1975 was designated as the day more than 7,500 BPW members will cover shopping centers across the state, distributing about 150,000 pieces of literature on the E.R.A.

FROM AN ARTICLE IN THE TONAWANDA NEWS, AUG. 16, 1975:

Delegates to the 56th Annual Convention of the National BPW voted to raise dues of their members by \$3. Of the \$3, \$1.50 will go toward education and lobbying in the states which have not yet ratified.

1975: President Jimmy Carter announces his intention to "use the influence of the Office ... to see that the E.R.A. becomes law". BPW co-sponsors the Women's Equality Day March, and more than 3,000 women march on Washington in support of the E.R.A.

FROM AN ARTICLE IN THE COURIER-EXPRESS, NOV. 6, 1975:

The American Assn of University Women joins BPW in establishing economic sanctions against states which have not ratified the Equal Rights Amendment. Dr. Marjorie Bell Chambers of Los Alamos, N.M., National AAUW President, outlined the program when she spoke before the Buffalo AAUW Branch. "We're not having someone like Illinois-born Phyllis Schlafly (National Chairman of STOP E.R.A.) invade other states with her ideas. What we are going to do is train leaders in membership workshops to carry on the E.R.A. fight."

Dr. Chambers, who describes herself as the mother of two "liberated" daughters and two "just as liberated sons" pointed out that the League of Women Voters and the Business & Professional Women's Clubs also have nationally decided upon sanctions by refusing to convene in non-E.R.A. states.

Where are we today on the E.R.A.?

The E.R.A. remains a top priority of BPW's Legislative platform. Since the deadline passed in 1982, BPW has supported re-introduction of the E.R.A. in each session of Congress.

BPW's current strategy involves working for passage of legislation that would have Congress essentially ignore the E.R.A.'s expired deadline should the legislatures of an additional 3 states ratify it, thus bringing the total of ratified states to the required 38.

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EQUAL RIGHTS AMENDMENT (ERA) HISTORY

1920s

In 1923, the Equal Rights Amendment is introduced in the U.S. Congress by Senator Charles Curtis (R-KS) and Representative Daniel Anthony (R-KS). Authored by Alice Paul, the so-called "Lucretia Mott Amendment" read, "Men and Women shall have equal rights throughout the United States and in every place subject to its jurisdiction." Congress fails to act on the amendment but it is reintroduced in each subsequent Congress.

1930s

In 1937, BPW becomes the first major organization, after the National Women's Party, to endorse the Equal Rights Amendment with unanimous approval at BPW's convention in Atlantic City.

1940s

The ERA remains buried in committee in the U.S. House of Representatives. In 1943, the wording of the Equal Rights Amendment is changed to its current form: "Equality of rights under the law shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any state on account of sex." It is hoped that the change will increase support for the amendment in Congress. In 1946, the Senate votes on the ERA for the first time and the measure is rejected.

1950s

The Senate twice approves the ERA, in 1950 and 1953, but both times with a rider that essentially invalidates the amendment.

1960s

In 1968, BPW's Legislation Chair Jane Culbreth appears before the Republican and Democratic Party platform committee hearings, urging them to include support of passage of the ERA in their national platforms.

1970s

1970 At a BPW Legislative Conference, Senator Birch Bayh (D-IN) announces that the first formal ERA hearings in the Senate in a dozen years will be held in May. At the hearings, BPW President Myra Ruth Harmon is the first witness to testify on behalf of the ERA after Members of Congress speak. The ERA passes the House of Representatives.

1971 BPW leaders again testify before Congress in favor of the ERA.

1972 On March 22, 1972, the ERA passes the Senate, with a tallied vote of 84-8. Hours later, Hawaii becomes the first state to ratify. Within thirty days, a total of sixteen states ratify and by the end of the year, the total exceeds thirty states.

1973 BPW establishes an ERA Ratification Fund with a set goal of \$250,000. In just thirty minutes, members attending the Miami Beach National Convention give \$10,000 in personal contributions.

1974 Maine, Montana, and Ohio ratify, bringing the tally up to thirty-three. Several states attempt to rescind their ratification of the ERA; however, the Supreme Court will have ultimate authority to rule on the Constitutionality of these efforts.



First Lady Betty Ford speaks at the ERA Summit at the 1977 BPW Conference in Houston.

1975 North Dakota ratifies. BPW members approve a bylaws change allocating \$1.50 from each member's annual dues to the ERA Ratification Fund, amounting to more than a quarter of a million dollars. First Lady Betty Ford actively supports BPW's ERA ratification effort.

1976 BPW establishes **ERAmerica**—the national campaign working for ratification.

1977 President Jimmy Carter announces his intention to "use the influence of the office...to see that the Equal Rights Amendment becomes law." BPW co-sponsors the Women's Equality Day March, and more than 3,000 women march on Washington in support of ERA.

1978 Thirty-five of the required thirty-eight states have ratified and, in July, ERA advocates march again on Washington in support of the ERA.

1979 BPW calls on Congress to extend the ERA's ratification deadline. Congress agrees and passes an extension until June 30, 1982.

1980s

1980 In May, 1980, a "March for Equality" attracts nearly 185,000 ERA supporters in Illinois.

1981 BPW unveils a media campaign, "One Year and Counting," at national convention.

1982 On June 30, 1982, the ERA's ratification deadline passes, but supporters refuse to give up and the amendment is re-introduced in the House of Representatives, with 221 co-sponsors.

1983 The ERA is re-introduced in the new Congress and in each subsequent Congress.

1990s

1992 BPW helps organize the ERA Summit to reinvigorate the ratification effort.

1993 Legislation is introduced in the House of Representatives to have Congress ignore the 1982 deadline and recognize ratification of the ERA should the legislatures of three states ratify the amendment—the "three state strategy."

1994 BPW continues to actively support the new strategy and is critical to gaining co-sponsors of the legislation in Congress.

1996 The Congressional Research Service issues a report supporting the "three state strategy."

Background photo is of the ERA March 1977-78.

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

National Business Women's Week
October 16 - 22, 1977

National Business Women's Week gives all Americans a welcome opportunity to reflect on the significant accomplishments of women in our economic life.

For too long our economy failed to benefit from the contributions of this country's women. This meant an unfortunate loss of creative energy and talent.

Thanks to the concerted efforts of many individuals and groups such as your Federation, the status of women in the business and professional fields has improved substantially. Today, nearly half of all women over 16 hold jobs, compared to less than one-third in 1950. Women now comprise about 40 percent of our total work force, and the degree of their participation in almost every phase of commerce, industry and government is steadily improving.

Even with these advances, however, the United States is still short of the goal of equal status for women. A vital step toward further advancement is to secure the adoption of the Equal Rights Amendment as the Twenty-seventh Amendment to our Constitution.

During this traditional observance, I especially want to congratulate the members of the National Federation of Business and Professional Women's Clubs, Inc., for their critical leadership in this area and in all efforts to realize full equality for women in our society.

/s/ JIMMY CARTER

BPW in the 1980's:

1982: Former Buffalo BPW president Mary Anne Curtis was elected District VIII Director. Monthly programs included topics such as "Women in Business - How to set and manage a business", a presentation on Buffalo's Historical Preservation program, and "Finances for the women of the 80's". A handbook of policies and procedures for all officers and committee chairs was developed.

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1984: A synopsis of 1984's activities from NYS BPW's NIKE articles: The focus of monthly meetings were women's issues: "Women in Public Relations", "How taxes affect Women", "Women and Social Security", and "Economics and Equity Issues" as viewed by a female NYS Senator. The highlight of 1984 was the celebration of the 50th Anniversary of Buffalo BPW, with a gala dinner event. Charter member Viola Kendall was presented a gold BPW charm at the event. Vi was the sole remaining charter member. Also honored were all former Buffalo BPW presidents. Buffalo BPW members played an active role in attending the state BPW convention (held in Buffalo) and the national BPW convention.

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1989: The Buffalo BPW became a member of the Women's Vote Coalition and as a demonstration of the power of the women's vote, encouraged members not to vote until the last 3 hours of Election Day. A Career Fair was initiated at the November meeting, as a means to learn about the variety of businesses and professions represented by Buffalo BPW members. Participating members used display tables and did a brief presentation about their career or business. This event continues through the 90's. A membership survey was conducted to gather feedback from members on their view of BPW and to develop programs for the future. The Community Project Committee collected small gifts for the children of Haven House (a domestic violence shelter) to give to their mothers for Mother's Day.

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BPW in the 1990's

In the 1990's Buffalo BPW continued its efforts to be an advocate of working women and to achieve equity for all women in the workplace. We participate in the annual Women's History Month planning and programs, with several members in key leadership roles in this community-wide event. Buffalo BPW played an active role in the Erie County Commission on the Status of Women and the Women's Action Coalition. Other projects included fund-raisers for the YWCA's Day Care Center, participation in Domestic Violence awareness programs, support of Ovarian Cancer Screening legislation, Take Our Daughters to Work Day, and training in Individual Development Program for women.

Other Key Events:

- ~ 1993 - Joan Sulewski, M.D. received the Susan B. Anthony Award
- ~ March 1994 - saw our celebration of Buffalo BPW's 60th anniversary
- ~ 1995 - former Buffalo BPW president Linda Przepasniak was elected District VIII Director.
- ~ 1995 - Members Geraldine Bard and Joan Sulewski were delegates to the United Nations 4th Conference on Women - Non-Government Organizations Forum in Beijing, China
- ~ 1996 - Joan Sulewski receives the Governor's Award for Excellence in Health Advocacy from the NYS Division For Womens
- ~ 1996 - Helen G. Jacob was honored by the naming of the Helen G. Jacob Women's Wellness Center at the Buffalo VA Hospital. It is the only such clinic named after a woman.
- ~ 1997 - Helen G. Jacob received the Susan B. Anthony Award