

# The road to equality for women

## Dutchess County women on the issue of equality

### WPN to host International Women's Day event March 10

Information provided by Dutchess County Historical Society

By Lea Bishop

#### Women's Professional Network

Since 1987, the month of March has been declared Women's History Month in the United States to recognize the contributions of women throughout history. It traces its origin to the first International Women's Day held in 1911 and now officially celebrated on March 8 throughout the world.

According to the official International Women's Day website ([internationalwomensday.com](http://internationalwomensday.com)), this is a "global day celebrating the social, economic, cultural and political achievements of women." In fact, the theme for International Women's Day 2020 is #EachforEqual, which is a call to action to build a more gender equal world.

On March 10, the Women's Professional Network (WPN) will host the annual "Hudson Valley Celebration of International Women's Day." It will be an event at which the achievements of women will be celebrated amidst a spirit of camaraderie and support for gender equality. The Women's Professional Network (WPN) is an educational and networking organization which promotes the professional development of women from the Hudson Valley.

Throughout history, women's roles were limited largely to taking care of their homes and families. Women could not vote nor own property unless they inherited it from their husbands or fathers.

Coverture, based in English common law, held that men and women were one financial entity and limited women's economic choices. Marriage was a necessity; education was not. Choices for opportunities outside the home were very limited. Women were largely encouraged to be submissive and obedient.

During the 20th century, society's view of women slowly started to change. The U.S. Homestead Act of 1862 made it easier for women to claim land in their own names. By 1900 all states had passed some form of New York State's Married Woman's Property Act by which a woman became an individual for economic purposes.

In 1848 in Seneca Falls, the first women's suffrage convention was held. The suffrage movement gained momentum through the remainder of the 19th century, despite strong opposition from both men and women.

At the end of the 19th century, industrialization led to more women working and contributing financially to their households. They became more vocal in demanding better working conditions and better pay. They fought for the right to be treated as equal members of society.

A very significant step on the road to women's equality occurred on August 18, 1920. Through the tireless efforts of leaders like Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, and Alice Paul the 19th Amendment was adopted by Congress giving women the right to vote.

Advances in the movement for women's equality continued slowly and in small steps. In 1922, Rebecca Felton of Georgia became the first woman U.S. Senator, and in 1972 Katherine Graham became the first female CEO of a Fortune 500 company, the Washington Post.

The Equal Credit Opportunity Act of 1974 removed the requirement that women needed a man to cosign for a loan or a credit card. In 1978 the Pregnancy Discrimination Act made it illegal for employers to dismiss women from their jobs due to pregnancy. The Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act of 2009 extended the time period



From left, women of Dutchess County who have spoken to the issue of equality for women: Julia Wilbur, argued for equal pay for women teachers, 1857. Anna G. W. Daley, shown in a later photo, argued for the "full help and cooperation of women" in society, through the right to vote, 1914. Anna Rozelle, shown in an earlier photo, fought for, and won, equal pay as a teacher, 1929. Courtesy of the Dutchess County Historical Society

for legally reporting instances of pay discrimination.

The history of the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) mirrors the long struggle for women's equality, and the controversy surrounding it. Authored by activist Alice Paul in 1920, the ERA states that "Equality of rights under the law shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or any State on account of sex. The Congress shall have the power to enforce by appropriate legislation, the provisions of this article."

The ERA was introduced in Congress in 1923, but not passed by the House until 1971 and by the Senate in 1972. It was then sent to the states to ratify with a 7 year deadline. 38 states were needed to ratify it, but by 1979 only 35 states had ratified it. Congress extended the deadline by three years. In January 2020, Virginia was the 38th state to ratify, but the deadline had been passed. Much interest and discussion has been generated as to its future.

Despite gains in educational attainment and changing views of women's evolving social and economic roles, women in the U.S. still earn, on average in 2019, \$.80 for every dollar that a man earns. This pay gap is based on the median salary for all men and women, and varies for different ethnic groups.

In 1963, President John F. Kennedy signed the Equal Pay Act of 1963, which prohibited wage discrimination based on sex. Employers were required to pay men and women equal pay for equal work. In 1963, women were paid \$.59 for every dollar men were paid. In the 56 years between 1963 and 2019, this gap has just narrowed by \$.21.

According to the April 2018 report "Closing the Gender Wage Gap in New York State," by the NYS Department of Labor, women in New York State earn \$.89 to each dollar earned by men, the narrowest wage gap of any state in the nation. According to the same report, women in Dutchess County earned only 74-75 percent of what men earned.

Contributing to this gap are a number of factors, including that men tend to hold higher-paying, higher-level positions. Women also tend to work in lower-paying occupations and take more time off due to family commitments. Lower total earnings during their working careers and subsequently lower retirement incomes negatively impact not only women themselves, who tend to live longer than men, but also their

families and their communities.

The New York State Department of Labor reports that nationally, on average, women lose up to \$400,000 during the course of their careers (\$800,000 for college-educated women), while this number drops to \$237,000 in New York State.

In 2019, the American Association of University Women (AAUW) Poughkeepsie, supported by the WPN, worked with the Dutchess County Legislature to declare April 2, 2019 as Equal Pay Day. This was the date when women's earnings match those of men from the prior year. This date falls on March 31 in 2020, and a proposal to declare it as Equal Pay Day will be submitted for consideration at the March 9 meeting of the Legislature.

According to the AAUW, "Nearly four in 10 mothers are primary breadwinners in their households, and nearly 2/3 are primary or significant earners. With more families relying on women's paychecks for their livelihood, we must address the wage gap for the sake of our families, their financial stability, and the economic vitality of Dutchess County."

Equal Pay Day in Dutchess County, International Women's Day and Women's History Month help to raise awareness of the gender wage gap. Laws such as the Paycheck Fairness Act need to be enacted, and existing anti-discrimination laws must be properly enforced. Business owners need to understand that they can improve their business performance by practicing equality in the workplace. Women must be aware of their legal rights and how to exercise them.

We should all work toward creating a gender equal world, one in which women's rights are truly recognized as human rights. Our families and communities thrive when everyone, both women and men, are treated equally, when everyone adopts an #EachforEqual mindset.

To register for the WPN's International Women's Day event, please go to <https://WPNIWD.eventbrite.com> or call Lea Bishop (WPN President) at 845-797-0412.

"...about one-half or one-third..."

Milan's Julia Wilbur 1857

Referring to the pay gap between men and women doing equal work teaching at public schools in New York State, Julia Wilbur drafted a proposal for the August 1857 meeting of the New York State Teachers Association. It read, in part, "... as the present compensation of female teachers is generally about one-half or one-third as much as men receive... there is no reason, if a woman performs it equally as well, why she should not be paid equally as much." It did not fully pass.

Born in Milan of an Orthodox Quaker family, Julia Wilbur went on to advocate for women's suffrage and the abolition of slavery living in upstate New York, and ultimately Virginia during the Civil War.

"...equal pay for equal labor..."

Poughkeepsie's Helen Loder 1880

Helen M. Loder was a working class woman who lived with her husband adjacent to the railroad tracks on North Hamilton Street, Poughkeepsie. In 1880 she attempted to assemble a local women's suffrage group, which appears not to have come to fruition until 1910.

"Every woman who desires as good a chance for the education of her daughters as her sons; every woman who desires equal pay for equal labor with men... is earnestly requested to meet September 15, 1880," she pleaded in an open letter in the local newspaper. 1880 was the year women were allowed to vote in school elections (only) in NY State.

"We must have full help and cooperation of the women..."

Poughkeepsie's Anna G. W. Daley, 1914

Arguing for women to have the right to vote, she said, "[To] succeed in our warfare against the internal foes of the social body, vice, corruption, disease and poverty, we must have the full help and cooperation of the women." She was the first local woman to be accepted to the NY Bar Association to practice law, and became a prominent political voice and occasional candidate for elected office. Many argued women's votes would bring a stronger moral dimension to governance.

"I got it!"

Town of Clinton's Anna Rozelle, 1929

Anna Rozelle, having taken a relatively brief respite from teaching to focus on family, was offered a job teaching again. But she knew that the salary offered was too low. That's because the person she was replacing was her son (who told her what he was paid). It was his first job. Although he had no experience, he was paid more than was offered to the much more experienced Anna Rozelle. She demanded. And got equal pay. Rozelle was the first woman to win a contested town election in the county when she was elected Overseer of the Poor in the town of Clinton in 1919.

More at [DCHSNY.org/1920path](http://DCHSNY.org/1920path).



### Animal Care Specialist

Perform animal husbandry duties for rats, mice, other rodents, birds, reptiles, amphibians, fish and other organisms, complying with all procedures and internal guidelines.

Must be willing to work some holidays and one weekend day/week, as well as occasional overtime hours. This entry level position is ideal for those interested in careers in laboratory animal research or veterinary medicine.

#### Qualifications:

- Associates degree in Animal Husbandry, Biology or related field required, bachelor's degree preferred.
- A minimum of one year of relevant previous experience in an animal care facility, a veterinary facility, a clinical setting or a research setting required.
- Proficiency with basic technical procedures, knowledge of clean room techniques or willingness and ability to learn them quickly required.
- Good working knowledge of word processing software and email.
- Must have strong organizational and communication skills, focus and attention to detail and ability to follow exacting written and verbal instructions.
- Ability to work both independently and as part of a team.
- Ability to undertake physical work and to regularly move, place, push, pull, and position objects weighing up to and including 50 pounds required.

This position will remain open until filled.

To apply: <https://apptrk.com/1831207>



## St. Patrick's Specials

Saturday, March 7<sup>th</sup> and Tuesday, March 17<sup>th</sup>

Open Until 9:00pm

**Corned Beef & Cabbage - \$15.95**

Slow Cooked and Tender served with Boiled Potato, Carrots & Celery

**Irish Lamb Stew - \$17.95**

Chunks of Lamb, Vegetables & Potato

**Stuffed Cabbage - \$15.95**

Served with Mashed Potato

Dinners Include: Soup or Salad and Irish Soda Bread

- Limited regular menu will be available after 4pm
- Reservations strongly recommended after 4pm

## Falls Diner

845-297-9600

235 Myers Corners Rd, Wappingers Falls

