

March 22, 2015

Women quietly do extraordinary things every day. To help shed light on the resilience and strength of Hoosier women and celebrate their accomplishments and contributions to history we are releasing an article every day in the month of March. These articles showcase how women have moved Indiana and our country forward and who inspire others to do great things in their own lives.

Women in Indiana have an important role to play. You can make a difference by:

- Learning more about the issues affecting women in Indiana.
- Voicing your opinion on issues important to you
- Serving as an advocate for women
- Mentoring another woman
- Join ICW's mailing list or social media outlets to be notified of upcoming events, programs and resources available to women

Go to www.in.gov/icw to learn more about the Indiana Commission for Women and their current initiatives.

Learn more at:

- **Indianapolis Star (6 February 2010), "Celebrating Black History: Emma Christy Baker was IPD Pioneer"**
(<http://archive.indystar.com/article/99999999/NEWS06/302070001/Celebrating-black-history-Emma-Christy-Baker-IPD-pioneer>)
- **Hoosier History Live (26 February 2011), "Police History in Indy"**
(<http://www.hoosierhistorylive.info/mail/2011-02-26.html>)
- **The Statehouse Files (5 March 2013), "Statehouse Display Celebrates Women in Indiana History"**
(<http://thestatehousefile.com/statehouse-display-celebrates-women-in-indiana-history/10365/>)

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Women's History Month 2015

Telling 31 stories in 31 days this March.

Emma Christy Baker (1865-1955)

When we think of those who served in law enforcement in the early 1900s, one would rarely picture a woman donning the police officer's uniform and badge, patrolling the streets of Indianapolis. Well picture this: a woman, an African-American woman at the age of 53 earning the same wage and performing the same duties as her male counterparts. On June 15, 1918, Emma Baker became the first woman and the first African-American woman to be a police officer for the Indianapolis Police Department.

The residents of Indianapolis knew Baker as the owner of a laundry business. She was a member of Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church, Old Settlers Social and Civic Club and the Loyal Legion. Based on the recommendations in a 1917 report of the New York Bureau of Municipal Research that Indianapolis should employ policewomen to work outside the police station, 13 policewomen (including two African-Americans) and a woman police sergeant were appointed to the Indianapolis Police Department at a special meeting of the Board of Public Safety on June 16, 1918. The sergeant, Clara Burnside was an experienced social worker and had served as a juvenile court probation officer for 12 years. During World War I, Emma joined Clara Burnside as the first women to work outside the station, patrolling public places Downtown. Baker was one of 13 officers in the female wing. It expanded to 23 in 1921, becoming the world's largest all-female police unit.

The African-American community appreciated Emma for her police work. From 1922-1938 Officer Baker was assigned to the Juvenile Court in the probation department. She was the only African-American assigned there in 1931. In 1938, due to a new chief of police's dislike for policewomen and economic influences from the Great Depression, Emma was assigned to be a matron in the jail. She retired from the department in August 1939. In October 1947, Emma Baker, one of 70 African-Americans representing civic, business, labor and professional groups, were assigned to a special committee to elect William H. Wemmer, Republican, to be Mayor.

Emma was born on February 10, 1865 in the town of Salem, in Washington County, Indiana to William W. and Hester Christy, Free African Americans who settled there in the 1830's from the Newberry District, South Carolina. Her family moved to the town of Indianapolis when she was an infant. Emma graduated from Public School Number 17 and Shortridge High School. On July 9, 1889, Emma married David M. Baker, born in 1870, Tennessee, who worked as a barber. They had a child, John W. D. Baker, born January 22, 1892, who died July 1899. David M. Baker died in 1928. We celebrate Emma Baker for her service and commitment to Indianapolis.