

Antoinette Dakin Leach

Sullivan, Sullivan County

April 3, 1859 – June 11, 1922

Antoinette Dakin was born in Wooster, Ohio. After her father died, her mother remarried a man from Owen County, Indiana, who later adopted her. The family moved to Gosport, Indiana, before relocating to Sullivan, Indiana, where she entered school. She attended school until she was asked to teach. She later married George Leach. She graduated from the University of Tennessee Law School in 1884.

Antoinette became the court reporter of the Sullivan-Greene County Circuit Court, introducing stenography and short hand and later, typewriters to the court. She applied for admission to the Greene County Bar in 1893. Her petition was submitted by John Bays, the lawyer she worked for, and was supported by six members of the local bar. However, she was denied on the basis of not being a voter. She challenged the decision and her lawyers argued in front of the Indiana Supreme Court that, despite not being allowed to vote, if a woman was otherwise qualified, she could be admitted to practice law in Indiana. Although the court granted Leach a license to practice law, many male lawyers disagree with the decision, and she was not admitted to the Indiana State Bar Association until 1909.

Antoinette also became involved in politics, especially in the women's rights movement. She established the first effective suffrage club in Sullivan and was described as "the most capable advocate of the Equal Suffrage movement since Susan B. Anthony" by the President of the National American Suffrage Association. In 1910, she became the State Organizer for the National Women Suffrage Association in Indiana and ran for State Representative for the Equal Suffrage Party.

Antoinette Leach died in Oxford, New York, and was buried in Sullivan, Indiana. In 1937, her life and work were honored by the placement of a memorial tablet in the rotunda of the Sullivan County Courthouse. In 1993, another tablet was placed commemorating *The Centennial Year of Her Securing the Right to Practice Law for Women in Indiana*.

For more information about Antoinette Dakin Leach, go to:
<http://scholar.valpo.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1916&context=vulr>.

For more information about *Writing Her Story*, go to: <http://www.in.gov/icw/2440.htm>.

Photo: Sullivan County Courthouse.




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