

# L A W

## Legal Profession Followed By Nation's Best Known Socialites

By EDITH SAMPSON, L. L. B.

**Women have steadily entered the legal profession. Their entrance into this conservative profession is a part of that larger effort of women to become oriented in modern society, a society in which, whether praised or condemned, the profession of law plays one of the vivid parts.**

The few years since women first entered into this new vocational field constitutes a pioneer period. Courage, persistence and faith have been shown in overcoming prejudice and in meeting the uncertainties of the new field. Law schools were not open to them in every instance, in fact, some of the leading universities of the country still bar their doors to women seeking the study of the law.

The educational requirements for the study of the law and for the admission to the bar in the various states run the gamut. In some jurisdictions those who have studied in law offices under supervision and for a certain length of time, may submit themselves as candidates while in other jurisdictions the requirements are a sound pre-legal education followed by a course in an accredited law school. The women of color who thus far have been admitted in the various states are products of these various jurisdictions.

Too much stress cannot be laid on securing the proper preparation and education for this important field of endeavor. The law needs women who will bring a trained and active intelligence to bear upon the many and difficult problems of justice in modern human relations. Women's present political status tends to widen their legal opportunities and eventually they will be able to take a more active part in the administration of justice and in the promotion of sound legislation. Women as lawyers are needed in matters concerning the protection and welfare of women, children; as public defenders in specialized women's courts; as probation officers in Juvenile Courts; as arbitrators on industrial accident boards; as judges in the Juvenile and Domestic Relations courts; as members of the state legislatures, etc.

The profession of law is concerned with the administration of justice. There are many branches of the law and women lawyers have thus far invaded all of them. They have not been especially active in the field of criminal law, yet practice of the criminal branch has great social significance and probably offers more opportunities for constructive work than any other branch. The profession is as broad and as far reaching as human activities. The same exact question and set of facts seldom if ever occurs in toto and human relationships are always involved. It is a profession which provides steady opportunity for growth. It opens the best possible method for constructive membership in the community, it develops an understanding of our social and civic institutions and offers a firm leverage for real effective citizenship and intelligent public service.

Professional women have many problems of their own to meet and to solve such as the problem of combining a professional career with marriage and parenthood. Women as newcomers in the professional field are having to make adjustments in their personal and social life. They have found in many instances that marriage is not incompatible with carrying on their professional activities. The flexibility of professional work as compared with clerical and industrial work facilitates such continuance in many fields. The tendency toward group practice, consulting service and part time work suggests several types of adaptation.

There are many successful women in independent practice but the majority have salaried positions with firms; governmental services or with social service agencies. Legal training for those preparing for the social service field is strongly advised for the law is a key to many social problems.

The States in which women of color have thus far been admitted to practice are as follows:

California, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Virginia and the District of Columbia and Kansas.

There have been more colored women admitted to practice law in the State of Illinois than in any other state in the Union. This is significant in as much as the first woman of any race ever admitted to the practice of law in any state was one Myra Bradwell, who was admitted in the state of Illinois in 1869.

An effort has been made by the writer to secure data on the women of our race who have secured their licenses and the following resume will give you some idea as to their training, admission and affiliations.

**MRS. RAYMOND PACE ALEXANDER**—Sadie T. M. Alexander appears to be the only colored woman admitted to practice in the state of Pennsylvania. She received a B. S. degree from the University of Pennsylvania in 1918, an M. A. degree in Economics from that same institution in 1919 and a Ph. D. degree was awarded Mrs. Alexander from the University of Pennsylvania in 1921. She received her L. L. B. degree in 1927 and in 1928 was



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admitted to practice. From 1921-23 she was the assistant actuary for the North Carolina Mutual Life Insurance Company. She is the author of "Standard of Living Among One Hundred Negro Migrant Families of Philadelphia."

**MRS. GERTRUDE RUSH**, of Des Moines, was admitted to practice in Iowa in 1918 and in that state she now engages in the general practice of law. She received an A. B. degree from the Des Moines College in 1914. From 1898 until 1905 she was engaged as a school teacher. She is identified with many civic, charitable and educational organizations.

**MISS ZANZYE HILL** appears to be the only colored woman ever admitted to practice law in the state of Nebraska. She attended the University of Nebraska, receiving an A. B. degree in 1927 and an L. L. B. degree in June of 1929. During the existence of the Woodmen of the Union Life Insurance Company of Arkansas, she was employed as junior counsel. She specializes in corporation and real estate law.

**MISS LENA O. SMITH** is probably the only woman of color ever admitted to practice in the state of Minnesota. She is engaged in the general practice of law in Minneapolis where she maintains a magnificent office in the Palace building. She graduated from the Northwestern College of Law in Minneapolis and was admitted to practice in the state courts in June, 1921. She is president of the local branch of the N. A. A. C. P., president of the Business and Professional Women's Club and member of the Board of Directors of the Urban League.

**MRS. RUTH WHITEHEAD WHALEY** was admitted to practice in the state of New York in June 1925. She had attended Livingstone College at Salisbury, North Carolina, receiving an A. B. degree in June 1919. She received an L. L. B. degree from Fordham University School of Law, New York, in June 1924. For several years she engaged in the general practice of law in New York and was one of the most outstanding members of the profession. She was an active and vigorous politician. She changed her residence within the past few years and is now practicing in North Carolina.

**MRS. ANNA JONES ROBINSON** was also admitted to practice in New York state, receiving her license in April, 1923. Her practice is limited to real estate and such other matters as she can handle without interference with her position as a teacher in the Frederick Douglass junior high school of New York.

**MRS. LISLE CARTER**, Mrs. Eunice Hunton Carter, was admitted to practice in the state of New York in 1934. Mrs. Carter has an excellent education, having received her A.B. and A.M. degrees from Smith college. She studied law at Fordham university and in 1932 received an L.L.B. degree. She is at present actively engaged in the general practice of law in New York. She is a member of the National Business and Professional Women's Club, National Association of College Women and is affiliated with a number of other organizations. She was the candi-

date on the Republican Fusion Ticket for the Assembly in 1934 and was defeated by a small number of votes. She was recently appointed by Mayor LaGuardia to serve as a member of the Bi-Racial Commission to study conditions in Harlem and she is serving as secretary of this body.

**MRS. ROSCOE C. BRUCE**, Mrs. Clara B. Bruce, has been admitted to practice in Massachusetts. She received her license in 1926, having prepared for the study of law in various institutions of learning. She attended Howard university, Radcliffe College, Boston University Law School and from this last named school was graduated in 1926. She was editor-in-chief of the Boston University Law Review in 1925-26. At the present time she is the assistant manager of the Dunbar apartment in New York.

**MISS BERNICE M. GRANDISON**, a graduate of the Portia Law School of Boston, was admitted to practice in Massachusetts in 1927. She engages in such practice as will enable her to continue her duties as a teacher in the public schools of Lynn, Mass. She is a member of the Bar Association of Boston.

**MRS. BLANCHE E. BRAXTON**, another graduate of the Portia Law School of Boston, was admitted to the Bar of Mass. in 1923.

**MRS. CARRIE MASON** has been admitted to practice in the state of Indiana. She received her legal education at Howard university and is at present a school teacher in Gary, Indiana.

**MRS. VIRGINIA STEPHENS PENDLETON**, who was admitted to practice in California in 1929 attended University of California, receiving an L. L. B. degree in 1922. She had previously received her B. S. degree from that same institution in May, 1924.

**MRS. ZEPHYR MOORE RAMSEY**, was admitted to the bar in California in 1930. Mrs. Ramsey had been admitted to practice in the state of Missouri in 1925 and was the first colored woman ever allowed the privilege of practicing in the courts of Missouri. She is a graduate of Howard University, receiving her A. B. and L. L. B. degrees there. Although a resident of Pasadena, Calif., she is at the present time in Washington, D. C., working for the Government. She is a member of the Blackstone Club of Los Angeles and is also affiliated with the Women's Political Study Club of Pasadena and the Epsilon Sigma Iota Sorority.

**MISS TABYTHA ANDERSON** has also been admitted to practice in the state of California. She received her legal training at the Hastings College in Calif., and at the Howard University Law School, graduating from the latter institution in 1931. She is engaged in the general practice of law and has recently been elected president of the San Francisco Branch N. A. A. C. P.

**MRS. ISADORA A. LETCHER** has been admitted to practice in the state of Michigan. She is a graduate of Howard University Law School. She is, at present, living in Washington, D. C.

**MRS. L. MARIAN POE**, was admitted to practice law in Virginia in 1925. She, too, was a graduate of Howard University and has the distinction of being the first colored to ever be admitted to practice in Virginia. Prior to her entrance into the active practice of law she had been engaged as a clerk, a stenographer and a bank cashier. She is the president of the Women's Community League and is secretary of the Citizen's Voters League of Newport News, Virginia, in which city she resides.

**MRS. INEZ FIELD SCOTT** of Hampton, Virginia, has also been licensed to practice in Virginia.

**MISS BERTHA DOUGLASS** of Norfolk, Virginia, is another woman of color who has been admitted to practice in the courts of Virginia.

**MISS OLLIE M. COOPER** was admitted to the Bar of the Supreme Court of the District of Columbia, Washington, D. C. in October, 1926. She is a resident of Washington and does not engage in the practice of law. She is the secretary to the Dean of the Howard University School of Law from which school she was graduated. She has been the assistant secretary of the National Bar Association.

**MRS. THELMA D. ACKISS** was admitted to practice in the courts of the District of Columbia, Washington, D. C. in 1932. She received her legal training at Howard University. She is a member of the N. A. A. C. P. and the New Negro Alliance and is a resident of Washington. She is continuing her studies at Howard University, working for an M.A. degree.

**MRS. N. K. CHRISTOPHER**, Mrs. Clara Christopher was admitted to practice in the courts of Ohio in 1922. She is a graduate of Baldwin Wallace Law College. For several years Mrs. Christopher was engaged in the real estate business and later accepted the position as Chief of the Department of Claims and assistant in the legal department of the National Benefit Life Insurance Company.

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ance Company at Washington. At that time Mrs. Christopher was said to have been the highest salaried woman of color in the insurance field. At present she is in business with her husband in Cleveland where they conduct a funeral establishment. For this business she received her training at the Cleveland School of Embalming where she was graduated in 1933.

MRS. HAZEL MOUNTAIN WALKER was licensed to practice in the courts of Ohio in 1921. She received her legal training at the Baldwin Wallace Law College. She has been a teacher in the public schools in Cleveland for many years. She is an active and vigorous politician and at the present time is the president of the Colored Women's Branch of the Democratic League of Ohio. She is a member of the Harlem Bar Association and of the Glinpin Players. For many years she took an outstanding part in the work of the N. A. C. P.

MRS. LOUISE PRIDGEON, (deceased) was licensed to practice in Ohio after her graduation from the Baldwin Wallace Law College in 1922. Mrs. Pridgeon until her death engaged in the general practice of law in Cleveland. She was the founder and for several years the president of the Harlem Law Club, an organization composed of all the colored lawyers of Cleveland.

MISS JANE HUNTER was admitted to practice in the courts of Ohio in 1926. She had received her L. L. B. degree from the Baldwin Wallace Law College. Miss Hunter is the executive secretary of the Phyllis Wheatley Association of Cleveland, and is a nationally known social worker.

MISS ELSIE AUSTIN was admitted to practice law in the courts of Ohio in 1931 and she was also admitted to practice in the courts of Indiana in 1932. Miss Austin received her A. B. degree from the University of Cincinnati and her L. L. B. degree from that same institution. She is engaged in the general practice of law and is a member of the executive committee of the N. A. A. C. P. of which organization she serves as chairman of the Legal Redress Committee. She also is a member of the National Society of University Women.

MRS. ALBERT JOHNSON, Mrs. Violet Anderson Johnson, was the first colored woman to be admitted to the practice of law on examination by the Supreme Court of Illinois. She is a graduate of the Chicago Law School, having received her L. L. B. degree in 1920. From 1905 to 1920 Mrs. Anderson conducted a Law Reporting Agency and from 1920 until the present time has been engaged in the general practice of law. She has a large clientele and is one of the outstanding members of the Bar. She is the National President of the Zeta Phi Beta Sorority. She has been admitted to practice in the United States District Court, Eastern Division and has also been admitted to practice before the Supreme Court of the United States. She is a member of the Cook County Bar Association and of the National Bar Association.

MRS. EDWARD H. MORRIS, Mrs. Jessica Morris, (deceased), a graduate of Northwestern University Law School, was admitted to practice in the State of Illinois, but never was actively engaged in the profession.

MRS. LEROY P. JOHNSON, Mrs. Mable Johnson, was admitted to practice in the State of Illinois in 1926. She had attended the State Normal College in Alabama, and later enrolled as a student at the Kent College of Law in Chicago, where she received her L. L. B. degree. Mrs. Johnson is associated with her husband in the general practice of law, but spends considerable of her time in the field of research. She served successfully for two years as chairman of the committee of management of the Y. W. C. A.

MISS ANNA CRISP, was admitted to practice in the State of Illinois in 1926. She attended the State Normal College at Nashville as well as Knoxville College. She later enrolled in the Chicago Law School where she received her L. L. B. degree. At the present time she is engaged in the general practice of law as well as acting as a court reporter.

MRS. MACON HUGGINS, Mrs. Alice Huggins, was admitted to

practice in the State of Illinois in 1929. She was a graduate of the Chicago Public Schools and the Chicago Normal College. She has been engaged for many years as a teacher in the public schools. In 1926 she received the L.L.B. degree from the John Marshall law school. At the present she is working for the Ph.D. degree in English at Loyola University. She engages in the practice of law and is associated with her husband in business. She is a member of the Cook County Bar Association, the Professional Women's Club and other organizations.

MRS. GEORGIA JONES-ELLIS was admitted to practice in the State of Illinois in 1925. Mrs. Ellis had attended the public schools of St. Louis, Mo. She received an L. L. B. degree from John Marshall Law School of Chicago in 1925. She has been employed by the Municipal Court of Chicago where she served for several years in the Court of Domestic Relations. She is now engaged in the general practice of law. Mrs. Ellis has been a candidate on the Republican ticket for membership in the State Legislature. She is the legal advisor of the National Association of Colored Women's Clubs, is a member of the Cook County Bar Association; has held office in the National Bar Association; is a member of the Professional Women's Club and other organizations.

MRS. EDITH S. SANPSON was admitted to practice in the State of Illinois in 1927. She received her L. L. B. degree from the John Marshall Law School of Chicago in 1925 and was the first woman ever to have an L. L. M. degree conferred upon her by Loyola University. She received her L. L. M. in 1927. In 1934 she was admitted to practice before the U. S. Supreme Court. Previously she had attended the Meadville Unitarian School, the New York School of Social Work and recently has been enrolled in the classes of the University of Chicago. She has been engaged in the field of Social Work and is at present a member of the staff of the Cook County Juvenile Court. Her practice of law is limited to such matters as do not interfere with her duties at the Juvenile Court. She is vice-president of the Cook County Bar Association; president of the Professional Women's Club; member of the American Association of Social Work-

ers; the Democratic Lawyers Club and other civic organizations.

MRS. GEORGE W. PITTS, Mrs. Sophia Boaz Pitts was in 1923 admitted to practice law in the State of Illinois. Mrs. Pitts is a graduate of Fisk University and later attended Northwestern University and the University of Chicago. She received her legal training at Kent College of Law in Chicago. Mrs. Pitts is a well known social worker and at one time was a member of the staff of the Juvenile Court. She is, at present, engaged in the general practice of law and takes an active part in Democratic politics. She is a member of the Cook County Bar Association, the Professional Women's Club, the Fisk Club, is secretary of the Illinois Children's Home, an Aid Society, Committee and is affiliated with numerous other organizations.

MISS BEULAH WHEELER is a graduate of Iowa University where she received her legal training. She has been admitted to practice in the courts of Kansas and Illinois. For three years before coming to Chicago she practiced law in Leavenworth, Kansas. She now conducts a business in Chicago.

MRS. ULYSSES GOODALL, Mrs. Barbara Goodall, was admitted to practice in the State of Illinois in 1930. She had attended school in Texas and later received her legal education at the Chicago Law School where she received her degree. Mrs. Goodall is at present engaged in the general practice of law and is affiliated with numerous civic and social organizations.

MRS. RUTH BRIGERMAN, was admitted to practice law in the State of Illinois in 1934. She received her legal education at The Chicago Law School from which institution she received a degree. At the present time she is engaged in social work.

The women mentioned in the foregoing review constitute the majority of those colored women who have been licensed to practice law and no doubt there are others whose names have not been included. The writer has attempted to secure information about these others but has been unsuccessful.