

# Making history in Sandusky

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*Members, representatives and supporters of Erie County's first all-female jury stand in front of the Sandusky-based courthouse in 1920.*

*Editor's note: To commemorate Women's History Month, celebrated all through March, the Register wanted to highlight a monumental moment occurring in Sandusky more than 100 years ago. The Sandusky Library History Blog recaps Erie County's first all-female jury.*

SANDUSKY — On Aug. 26, 1920, an important first quietly took place at the Erie County Courthouse in Sandusky.

Early that morning, the ratification of the 19th

Amendment to the Constitution of the United States was certified. That amendment read in part, "The right of citizens in the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any state on account of sex."

On Aug. 18, 1920, Tennessee was the 36th state to ratify the 19th amendment. Ohio had ratified the amendment on June 16, 1919.

On the morning of Aug. 26, 1920, at the Erie County Courthouse, Judge Roy Williams was to conduct the trial of Pennok Jeffries vs. the Pennsylvania Railroad for an automobile accident that occurred in 1919, when a train car struck Jeffries' automobile.

Ten men were summoned to serve on the jury, but nine offered excuses as to why they couldn't serve. Having heard that the 19th Amendment had been ratified, Judge Williams said, "I decided to impanel a woman jury. Twelve women were summoned. Twelve women responded, and twelve women served."

The women were sworn in, the cases were stated, and cross-examinations were made. When the statements were concluded, the judge gave the women of the jury their instructions, and they retired to the jury room. They made their decision in four minutes and shortly returned to their seats in the jury box. They decided for the plaintiff, who was awarded \$1,500.

After the trial was over, the judge congratulated the women for their service on the jury. Each of the 12 women were paid \$2 for serving on the jury.

This was the first all-female jury in Erie County — and one of the earliest in the United States.

The women of the jury included Katherine H. Biller, Mary R. Boehmer, Sarah Cooke Sloane, Alice K. Hertlein, Alice D. Mack, Anna Sutton, Emma Broadbent, Sallie W.D. Neill, Mabel L. Magill, Sarah C. Scott, Henrietta Zerbe and Bertha Mitchell. The three men in the photo are Roy Williams, George Beis and Claude Minor.

This historic event was commemorated with an Ohio historical marker erected during Ohio's 2003 bicentennial. The marker is located near the north entrance of the Erie County Common Pleas Courthouse, on Columbus Avenue, where the photograph of the women of the jury was taken.