

The Legacy of Mary Lathrop

Mary Lathrop was born in 1865 to a Philadelphia Quaker family. At age 19, she became a reporter at a local newspaper. She had a distinguished career until poor health forced her to choose a new profession at age 30. Lathrop came to Colorado and pursued a legal degree at the University of Denver College of Law where she graduated first in her class. She passed the Colorado Bar in 1896 with a score that would stand as a record until 1941.



Lathrop hung her shingle in Colorado in 1897, specializing in probate law. She continued to influence this field, helping to redraft probate statutes and assisting in developing the Small Guardianship Law. Her most famous case was *Clayton v. Hallett*, which established the law of charitable bequests in Colorado.

Lathrop was a woman whose many “firsts” would inspire others to follow in her footsteps. After being turned down twice because “women should not practice law,” she was the first woman admitted to practice before the U.S. District Court in Colorado. She was also the first woman to open a law office in Colorado, the first woman to argue before the Colorado Supreme Court, the first woman to join the Colorado and Denver Bar Associations and was one of the first two women to join the American Bar Association.

Lathrop recognized the importance of community involvement. During her lifetime, she made anonymous donations to help students. She also received numerous awards for her service work and excellence in the legal profession. After her death in 1951, Lathrop left the bulk of her estate to establish a student loan fund at the University of Denver.

In order to preserve the memory of this outstanding early leader in the community, and recognize women who exemplify her spirit, the Colorado Women’s Bar Association (CWBA) began presenting the Mary Lathrop Award in 1991 and has made an annual presentation each year since. The CWBA gives the Mary Lathrop Award to an outstanding female attorney(s) who has enriched the community through her legal and civic activities.

Mary Lathrop Trailblazer Award Recipients

1991	Elizabeth Adams Conour, Elizabeth L. Guyton Girch, Estelle Hadley, and Helen T. Street	2004	Marla Williams
1992	Mary Brickner, Margaret B. Ellison, and Brooke Wunnicke	2005	The Hon. Nancy E. Rice
1993	The Hon. Jean Dubofsky, Marilyn Traub Meadoff, and The Hon. Jacqueline St. Joan	2006	Fay M. Matsukage
1994	Natalie S. Ellwood	2007	Pamela Robillard Mackey
1995	Norma Comstock, Karen Steinhauser and The Hon. Zita L. Weinshienk	2008	Lynda A. McNeive
1996	Sheila Hyatt, Barbara Salomon, and Mimi Wesson	2009	The Hon. Elizabeth A. Starrs
1997	Cathlin Donnell and Mary Hoagland	2010	Deborah R. Adams
1998	Susan Barnes and The Hon. Claudia Jordan	2011	The Hon. Mary A. Celeste
1999	Gale Norton and Gail Schoettler	2012	The Hon. Janice B. Davidson and Lynn Feiger
2000	The Hon. Christine Arguello and Dottie Wham	2013	Lorraine Parker and Doris Truhlar
2001	The Hon. Rebecca Love Kourlis	2014	The Hon. Patricia Coan
2002	The Hon. Mary Mullarkey	2015	The Hon. Sandra I. Rothenberg
2003	The Hon. Ruth Bader Ginsburg and Mary E. Ricketson	2016	Helen Shreves
		2017	Rebecca Alexander
		2018	Elizabeth (Beth) McCann
		2019	Allison (Alli) Gerkman
		2020	Velveta Golightly-Howell
		2021	The Hon. Karen Ashby
		2022	The Hon. Theresa A. Spahn