

# May Arkwright Hutton: Champion for Working Women

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Both rich and poor women fought for equal rights. May Arkwright Hutton fought for working women. Hutton once worked as a cook in a mining camp. She wrote in 1909 that her heart was with "the laundry worker, the shop girl, the stenographer, the teacher, the working woman of every type, whose home and fireside and bread are earned by their own efforts."

Hutton became rich because of her own work. She moved from Ohio to Idaho as a young woman. There, she made money cooking, washing dishes, and serving meals to hungry miners. With her husband, Levi W. Hutton, she took money she made working and invested it in a silver mine. That investment would eventually make the Huttons millionaires.



May Arkwright Hutton, Image via HistoryLink.org

## What a Difference a Few Miles Make

The Huttons moved to Spokane, Washington in 1906. May Arkwright Hutton quickly got involved in the Washington suffrage movement. Idaho had given women the right to vote in 1896. When she lived there, Hutton had been a regular voter. Hutton did not appreciate that she had to stop voting just because she had moved a few miles west. Hutton also said that the equal right to vote would also help women get equal wages for doing the same work as men.

## Strategy Differences Lead to Split

Hutton conflicted with other suffrage leaders. Her views, campaign strategies, and personal behavior put her in conflict with suffrage leaders, especially Emma Smith DeVoe in Seattle. Hutton preferred one-on-one meetings with politicians. She did not organize many public demonstrations. Seattleites leaned toward more visible tactics, like blanketing neighborhoods with posters. Many women thought Hutton was a little rough around the edges, and did not like that she sometimes swore.

## The Vote Is Just the Beginning

In spite of these differences, the women were able to work together to get the right to vote in Washington in November 1910. Hutton saw equal suffrage as a beginning, not an end. She fought for many other causes, especially the eight-hour workday for women.

Hutton died in 1915, at age 55. Both the rich and poor attended her funeral. The Spokane Daily Chronicle called Hutton an "author, suffragist, philosopher, humanitarian and probably one of the best known women in the great Northwest."



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