

The First 50 Women in Idaho Law

DELLA M. GREGORY THOMAS

December 24, 1907

(1878 – 1967)

Della M. Gregory Thomas was born in Kansas City, Missouri in 1878 to A.T. and Mary C. (Bradley) Gregory. Thomas, originally a teacher, made her way to Washington state where she met Harvey A. Thomas, a native of Spokane, who was then working as farmer in Riverside, Washington.

On February 19, 1903, she and Harvey were married and together they eventually practiced law in Riverside, although the Washington State Bar does not have any record of her being admitted in Washington. On February 11, 1905, the Thomases had their first child, a daughter named Lenore Catherine. Although they reportedly had a “profitable practice” in Riverside, the Thomases decided that they “wanted a larger field.” So, in December 1907 they moved to Shoshone, Idaho, to practice law.

On December 24, 1907, Thomas was admitted as the third woman to practice law in Idaho. The December 27, 1907, *Shoshone Journal* reported the unusual event in an article entitled “A New Law Firm: Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Open Office in Shoshone:”

Thomas & Thomas is the name of a new law firm that has just located in Shoshone. It is somewhat different from the ordinary law firm, for it is composed of Harvey A. Thomas and his wife, Della M. Thomas. Both have passed the required examination and are thoroughly qualified.

The paper went on to report that the Thomases “have secured offices over the Baugh drug store [in Shoshone] and will probably also open an office in Gooding.”

The Thomas family seemed to settle into life in Idaho and, in 1909; Della gave birth to her second child, a son named Wilbur. However, the family did not remain long in Idaho. According to the 1910 census, the Thomas family moved to Texas City, Texas, shortly after Wilbur’s birth. Harvey was employed as an attorney for Texas City and Della was listed as an attorney, but no employer was given. According to the records of the Texas State Bar, Della was never admitted in Texas.

According to the 1920 census, the Thomas family moved once again, this time to New York City. Harvey was listed as an attorney, but Della was no longer identified as an attorney. Ironically, the first woman admitted in Idaho, Helen L. Young, was also living in Manhattan in 1920. Although Thomas’ precise date of death is unknown, Social Security records suggest that she survived until 1967.