

# Martha Strickland Clark

Women's rights advocate; first woman in the state to serve as an assistant prosecutor, to practice law in Detroit, and to bring cases before the Michigan Supreme Court

When Martha Strickland Clark completed law school in her early 30s, she had already made a name for herself as a women's rights advocate. During much of her life she lectured on women's role in civic life and taught women how to run meetings and give speeches so they could participate effectively. In 1888, she made national news as the first woman to appear before the Michigan Supreme Court, arguing a difficult divorce case. She also participated in a case that ensured women could take jobs in local government. Although some of her views were considered radical at the time, her zeal and ability could not be denied, even by her critics.

- **1874–82** Attends law school briefly; begins lecturing on behalf of women's rights
- **1883–86** Returns to law school and graduates; becomes an assistant prosecutor and practices civil law in Clinton County
- **1887–91** Becomes first woman lawyer to practice in Detroit; brings several cases before the Michigan Supreme Court, including *Thompson v Thompson* (1889) and *Wilson v Newton* (1891)

Her parents supported equality for women and her father, a lawyer and politician, encouraged her to study law.

