

Bewitched, Battered, and Bewildered: A history of domestic violence:

753 B.C. Rome: Wife beating accepted and condoned. Laws permit the husband to beat his wife with a rod or switch as long as its circumference is no greater than the man's right thumb, hence "The Rule of Thumb." Tradition of these laws is perpetuated in English Common Law and throughout most of Europe.

300 A.D. Church fathers reestablish the husband's patriarchal values and authority of Roman and Jewish law. Constantine the Great has his wife burned alive when she is no longer of use to him.

900-1300 Middle Ages: European noblemen beat their wives as regularly as they beat their serfs; male peasants follow their lords' example. The Church sanctions the subjection of women. Priests advise abused wives to win their husbands' good will through increased devotion and obedience. A Medieval theological manual, gives man permission to "castigate his wife and beat her for correction..."

1400's The Christian church supports wife beating while encouraging husbands to be more compassionate and use moderation in punishments of their wives. A Christian scholar writes *Rules of Marriage*. It supports wife beating.

Law in early America follows English common-law that permits wife beating for correctional purposes. Husbands allowed to whip wives with a switch no bigger than their thumb.

1500's In England, women and children are taught it is their sacred duty to obey the man of the house. Violence against wives is encouraged throughout this time.

1792 *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* by Mary Wollstonecraft seeks changes in this education for women and kinder treatment by husbands and lovers.

1861 John Stuart Mill writes *The Subjection of Women*, waits 8 years to publish, thinking the public not ready to accept his essay.

1866 The American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals is formed. It predates the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (1875). Both predate any organization preventing cruelty to women.

1871 Alabama is the first state to rescind the legal right of men to beat their wives. Massachusetts declares wife beating illegal.

1882 Maryland passes the first law that makes wife-beating a crime.

1924 A French court rules a husband does not have the right to beat his wife. Prior, the Napoleonic Code ruled, suggesting, "Women, like walnut trees, should be beaten every day."

1966 A Chicago study reveals from September 1965 to March 1966, 46.1% of the major crimes perpetrated against women took place in the home.

Every state except Hawaii has passed child abuse report laws.

1967 The state of Maine opens one of the first shelters in the U. S.

1970 In Chicago and many U.S. cities, married battered women who leave their husbands are denied welfare due to their husbands' income.

1971 In Kansas City, MO, 40% of all homicides are of spouse killing. In almost 50% of the cases, police were summoned five or more times within a two-year period before the homicide.

1972 In Kansas City, MO, domestic disturbance calls were 82% of the total calls for that year. In Detroit, 4,600 battered women's cases "disappeared" as they moved through the criminal justice system. Only 300 went to trial.

Ms. July magazine reports on a bowling alley ad in Michigan, "Have some fun. Beat your wife tonight. Then celebrate with some good food and drink with your friends."

1974 Boston City Hospital reports 70% of ER assault victims were women attacked in homes by husbands or lovers.

In Fairfax County, VA, one of the wealthiest counties in America, police report 4,073 family disturbance calls; approximately 30 assault warrants are sought each week. Cites domestic violence is not just a ghetto issue.

A TIME article on Erin Prizzey's Chiswick Center appears only in the European edition, suggesting spousal battering is not of interest in America.

1975 NOW declares marital violence a major issue and establishes a National Task Force on Battered Women/Household Violence.

1976 The Domestic Violence Act established in U.S.

1978 The House by a vote of 205 to 201 fails to pass the Domestic Violence Act of 1978. The Senate passes it.

1981 The Office on Domestic Violence is dismantled after President Reagan's election. By November, the National Center on Child Abuse and Neglect could site no federally funded programs for battered women.

1989 Brooklyn Supreme Court sentences Chinese immigrant to 5 years probation for using a claw hammer to smash the skull of his wife. Citing traditional Chinese values about adultery and loss of manhood drove him to kill his wife. The court states he was as much a victim as his wife due to extenuating circumstances. The decision sent a message to battered immigrant women that they had no recourse against domestic violence.

1992 U.S. Surgeon General ranks abuse by husbands to be the leading cause of injuries to women aged 15 to 44. The FBI reports 1,431 women killed by husbands or boyfriends.

1994 Congress passes the Violence Against Women Act. It creates for the first time a federal right to sue the assailant for gender-based violence.

2000's Across America, though differing by states, domestic violence is not a crime in and of itself. Attached to any underlying crime it can be a felony, a misdemeanor, or dismissed.