

# History of civil marriage in the U.S.

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Civil marriage has undergone significant changes in the United States since the country's inception:

- 1830 - Right of married woman to own property in her own name (instead of all property being owned exclusively by the husband) in Mississippi.
- 1848 - Right of married women to own property in her own name in New York.
- 1854 - The Republican party referred in its platform to polygamy as one of the "twin relics of barbarism" (in addition to slavery). At the time, polygamy was a practice of some Mormons. *See plural marriage.*
- 1862 - The United States Congress enacted the Morrill Anti-Bigamy Act, signed by Abraham Lincoln, which made bigamy a felony in the territories punishable by \$500 or five years in prison.
- 1873 - Supreme Court rules that a state has the right to exclude a married woman from practicing law.
- 1874 - Congress passed the Poland Act, which transferred jurisdiction over Morrill Anti-Bigamy Act cases to federal prosecutors and courts in Utah, which were not controlled by Mormons.
- 1879 - The Morrill Anti-Bigamy Act was upheld by the United States Supreme Court in the case of *Reynolds v. United States*
- 1882 - Congress passed the Edmunds Act, which prohibited not just bigamy, which remained a felony, but also bigamous cohabitation, which was prosecuted as a misdemeanor, and did not require proof an actual marriage ceremony had taken place. The law also allowed polygamists to be held indefinitely without a trial.
- 1887 - Congress passed the Edmunds-Tucker Act, which allowed prosecutors to force polygamist wives to testify against their husbands, and abolished the right of women in Utah to vote.
- 1890 - Mormons in Utah officially renounce polygamy through the 1890 Manifesto.
- 1900 - All states now grant married women the right to own property in their own name.
- 1904 - Mormons in Utah officially renounce polygamy again, excommunicating anyone who participates in future polygamy.
- 1907 - All women acquired their husband's nationality upon any marriage occurring after that date.
- 1920 - Right of women to vote.
- 1933 - Married women granted right to citizenship independent of their husbands.
- 1965 - Supreme Court overturns laws prohibiting married couples from using contraception.
- 1967 - Supreme Court overturns laws prohibiting interracial couples from marrying (*Loving v. Virginia*).
- 1971 - Supreme Court upholds an Alabama law that automatically changed a woman's legal surname to that of her husband upon marriage.
- 1972 - Supreme Court overturns laws prohibiting unmarried couples from purchasing contraception.
- 1975 - Married women allowed to have credit in their own name.
- 1976 - Supreme Court overturns laws prohibiting abortions for married women without the consent of the husband.
- 1996 - President Clinton signs the Defense of Marriage Act into law.
- 2004 - Massachusetts recognizes same-sex marriage.

## See also

- Same-sex marriage in the United States
- Same-sex marriage legislation in the United States
- Same-sex marriage legislation in the United States by state
- Same-sex marriage in the United States public opinion
- Same-sex marriage status in the United States by state
- List of benefits of marriage in the United States
- Defense of Marriage Act
- Marriage Protection Act
- Defense of marriage amendment
- Federal Marriage Amendment
- Domestic partnerships in the United States
- Freedom to Marry Coalition

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