

## Timeline

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### Childhood in Europe

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- 1845 (?) Marie Gysin is born in Alsace to Swiss parents, Johannes Gysin and Elisabeth Grieder, who moved to Alsace to work in a silk mill specializing in the manufacture of elegant ladies' hair ribbons; Marie was second child.
- 1846-7 (?) Gysin family returns to home canton of Basel, Switzerland, and family continues to grow. Mary was probably bilingual (French and German).

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### Immigration to America

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- 1870 (?) Arrives in the New World in an attempt to relieve the poverty of her large family. Learns English fairly quickly, although her "punctuation and orthography were occasionally eccentric." 1870 census-taker reports a Mary Gisan, immigrant from Sweden, aged 23, working as a domestic for a family in Portland. This may be Marie Gysin.
- 1873 Younger sister Rosa Gysin arrives in New York and reaches Portland one year later.
- 1870's Future husband Daniel Leonard's common-law wife, Sarah Leroy Leonard, successfully sues him for equity after living with him and bearing four children. (Leonard was also the veteran of a lawful marriage).
- Early 1870's Works as a seamstress in Portland.

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### Marriage and Divorce

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May 18-27 (?), 1875 Marries Daniel Leonard, owner of a hotel east of Wasco, Oregon (where the Oregon trail crossed the John Day River, 37 miles east of The Dalles in Wasco County). Wedding is attended by Rosa Gysin. Daniel Leonard is 57 years old; he says he is 50. Mary says she is 30. They are married in Portland at the St. Charles Hotel by the Rev. John Gantenbein.

Fall 1877 Daniel Leonard files for divorce, charging adultery. Mary cross-files, claiming physical and mental cruelty. They were living separately at this time. Daniel agrees in temporary settlement to pay Mary's maintenance.

December, 1877 Daniel and Mary offer conflicting stories at trial:

Mary's Story	Daniel's Story
As a condition of marriage, Daniel had agreed to give her a large sum of money, which he reneged on after the wedding, saying to her that "he had her in his power now... and that she was swindled and might as well make up her mind to stand it, as she could not help herself."	There was no promised marriage settlement. Mary had stolen the key to his strong-box, had it duplicated, and stolen from it large sums of money, and carried away the deeds of title to his property.
Daniel was physically abusive.	Mary was physically abusive. She also denied him his "marital rights" and "betrayed him in his own house and bed with one Nathaniel Lindsay" (a telegraph lineman and resident of Daniel's inn).
She worked in the kitchen of his public house, "straining her feeble strength until it broke." When she became ill, Daniel refused to pay her doctor bills.	Mary feigned illness and took frequent trips to The Dalles, Portland, and San Francisco, at his expense.

### Murder of Daniel Leonard

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- Late Dec., 1877 Daniel refuses to follow the court order requiring him to pay her temporary maintenance. Mary writes Daniel a letter, demanding her maintenance and her property. The letter alleges that she is “willing to suffer punishment” to show what a “brute” Daniel is, and goes on to warn him: “I have the spirit to get even with you -- do your worse (sic) and it will corn (sic) home to you -- I swear it by my life... don’t fool with a woman like me... my soul cried out of the debth (sic) of pain and asked for vengeance -- beware I say once more...”
- Jan. 4, 1878 Daniel Leonard is shot in the head with a “little gun.” There are no witnesses to the shooting, no indication of a struggle or an attempted burglary, and no one but Mary with a motive to kill him.
- Jan. 5, 1878 Mary Leonard, who had been seen in the neighborhood the night of and the day after the killing, is arrested on a charge of assault with intent to kill and locked up in the county jail at The Dalles. Daniel never actually identifies her as his assailant, but his attorney, Colonel N.H. Gates, makes insinuations about a “conspiracy.”
- Jan. 16, 1878 Daniel Leonard dies of gunshot wounds.

### Imprisonment and Trial of Mary Leonard

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- Spring 1878 Col. Gates, who was Daniels’ divorce lawyer and the mayor of The Dalles, calls for an indictment against Mary Leonard and Nathaniel Lindsay.
- June 26, 1878 Mary Leonard and Nathaniel Lindsay go before a grand jury and are indicted; Leonard for murder; Lindsay for inciting, counseling, and abetting murder.
- Jan-Nov, 1878 Mary Leonard is imprisoned, but takes occasional walks around town on the arm of Sheriff Crossen. Lindsay is also imprisoned for 11 months.
- July, 1878 D.A. successfully moves for a postponement, claiming he has been unable to serve the necessary witnesses.
- November 4, 1878 Abigail Scott Duniway champions Leonard in her newspaper, *The New Northwest*, and decries the state’s delay of the trial.
- November 18, 1878 Stands trial for murder. Represented by W. Lair Hill, who successfully moves for separate trials for Leonard and Lindsay. Hill is one of the most respected lawyers on the West Coast, and the compiler of Oregon’s second code and Washington’s first code. Case file includes an affidavit which sought to subpoena Rosa Gysin Schlickeiser, who was living with her husband C. Fritz Schlickeiser on a farm near Wilsonville, but there is no indication that she ever traveled to The Dalles for the trial. She had her first child on January 20, 1879, and may not have been in a condition to travel.

Hill conducts a masterful defense, shredding the prosecution's flimsy evidence. Closing arguments are heard on the third day of trial.

November 20, 1878 Not Guilty verdict returned as to Mary Leonard. Case against Nathaniel Lindsay is dropped. Local newspaper comments that "...even though acquitted, the prisoner seems totally broken in spirit."

Late 1878 Stays in The Dalles until Daniels' will is probated. Mary Leonard was his sole heir. Moves to Portland and sets up several boardinghouses.

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### Law School and Admission to the Bar

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1883 Women's suffrage passes in Washington Territory. Leonard moves to Seattle, and reads law for 18 months under Colonel J.C. Haines, a member of Struve, Haines, and McMicken, the leading Seattle law firm of that day.

October, 1884 Appears before a three-member panel of the local bar, which certifies to her proficiency in all branches of the law, and admits her to the bar of Washington Territory.

March 11, 1885 Admitted to practice in the court of Washington Territory.

March 18, 1885 Leonard is denied admission to the Oregon bar by the Oregon Supreme Court. She argues that she is eligible to practice in Oregon because she has passed the bar in Washington, and it is the custom of Oregon courts to admit attorneys of courts of other states without examination, "and, in many instances, without proof of good moral character." Despite this policy, court denies admission, per curiam, citing *Case of Lelia J. Robinson*, 131 Mass. 376. Court does emphasize that the legislature has the power to change the law.

March 27, 1885 U.S. District Judge Matthew P. Deady admits Leonard to practice in federal court, citing Federal Act of 1879, which allowed women to practice in the Supreme Court of the United States.

Nov., 1885 Mary travels to Salem to speak to legislators about her plight. She persuades Senator J.M. Siglin to sponsor Senate Bill 50. In special session, Oregon legislature enacts a law providing that "hereafter women shall be admitted to the practice of law as attorneys... upon the same terms and conditions as men." The law is signed by Governor Z.F. Moody on November 20, 1885.

April 13, 1886 Oregon Supreme Court grants Leonard admission to Oregon bar. It tries to use a one-year residency rule to keep her out; Leonard gets permission to argue her own case before the court and successfully shows that the rule has never been enforced on male applicants. The text of her argument was reported in the Portland newspapers: "I am now pleading to this court not to impose upon me a hardship which the court deems too hard for a strong, free and unfettered man to bear. I am not a free man, but since I belong to the protected sex, or oppressed sex, whichever you please, and since the legislature with almost unanimous voice has agreed to relieve me from the cruel shackles placed upon my wrists,

I stand before this court a woman thrown upon her own resources, and beseechingly (*sic*) I reach out my imprisoned hands and ask to have these shackles removed. I am asking for the pitiful privilege to be allowed to obtain a livelihood as best I can which is natural and God-given right and my right in law.”

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### Legal Career

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- 1890 or 1891 Sits for photograph which is sent back to Switzerland (see cover) (is she proud of her accomplishments? Wants family back home to know she's a successful lawyer?).
- Late 1880's; 1890's Develops a practice in Portland, arguing mostly in the police courts. Her writing is pretty bad, but her courtroom skills are excellent. Demands to be called “Judge” Leonard. Hangs out in pubs with other (male) attorneys. Doesn't make much money, so starts operating another boardinghouse (bordello?), called “Richelieu Rooms.” Develops a reputation as a drinker and a fighter. Fights with tenants, neighbors, landlord.
- Late 1890's Another woman, Florence Olson, is admitted to the Oregon Bar in 1897. Olson later comments that Leonard was “considered an able lawyer by her contemporaries, and possessed ability above the average.”

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### Leonard's Second Arrest

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- 1897 William Ballis, a purveyor of coffee and spices and Leonard's Richelieu Rooms landlord, has her arrested for threatening his life after he tried to evict her. At trial, Ballis claims that she “drew from the folds of her garment a pistol; she uttered threats against his life.” Newspaper reports liken the trial to a “circus.” Leonard has four attorneys, but they unable through their entreaties to convince her to stick to the case at hand. She uses the witness stand as a bully pulpit, railing against those who have wronged her and rearguing previous cases. Finally she admits to having carried a pistol. And a hammer. But claims that the pistol is too small to do anyone harm. (Note: it took Daniel Leonard 12 days to die...)
- 1897 Leonard is acquitted and holds a victory party/press conference, at which she issues the following statement: “The lady is not young or stylish withal she is comely and attractive possessed (*sic*) of sparkling wit and her company pleases young attorneys.” She does seem to have several young attorneys as drinking companions.

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### More Trouble: Branson v. Wickstrom

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- 1898 Co-represents Annie Branson with Newton McCoy. Branson was suing Wickstrom for breach-of-contract. Leonard gets arrested three times during the proceedings: once for suborning perjury, once for threatening bodily violence, and once for embezzlement because she refuses to pay \$1.40 in witness fees to her client's mother.
- Embezzlement charge brought before Judge Frank Hennessey, an old enemy of Leonard, who finds her guilty and fines her \$18. Sends her to jail when she won't (or can't?) pay. Group of young attorney-admirers apply for a writ of habeas corpus to the Circuit Court,

which is granted, since the minimum fine for the offense charged was \$25, so Hennessey had erred. Once she is released, Leonard issues the following press release/threat: "I think my release on a writ of habeas corpus saved my life, and maybe his [Hennessey's]... Nobody knows what the result may be if such a misfortune happens to me again."

Leonard loses Branson v. Wickstrom and moves for a new trial. Branson tries to fire Leonard. Leonard shows up to argue the motion for a new trial anyway, and in open court accuses Branson, Branson's mother, and her co-counsel Newton McCoy of entering into a conspiracy to do her out of her fee, and announces that she thinks Branson brought the case only to swindle Wickstrom. She then withdraws the motion for a new trial.

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### Decline and Death

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- 1906-1912 Acquires Anthony G. Ryan as a client. Ryan is an alcoholic who later goes insane. People begin to doubt Leonard's competency as well. Her last case is tried on behalf of Ryan. She ties up the court for years, making frivolous motions as Ryan's "next friend." Her pleadings allege conspiracies, improprieties, etc., all in a messy scrawl with strike-overs, bad numbering, writing in the margins, etc.
- June 1912 Ryan case continues. Judge gives her a week to file an amended answer and acquire co-counsel. She can't find co-counsel (no case? no money?). Judge Gatens grants a default judgment to the plaintiff. Leonard files a motion to set aside the judgment, complete with an affidavit accusing Gatens of threatening her from the Bench. She later backs down and withdraws the motion to set aside the judgment.
- Oct. 11, 1912 Admitted to Multnomah County Hospital.
- Oct. 24, 1912 Dies in hospital of heart disease. No gravesite. Remains may have been sent to University of Oregon Medical School, but all medical school records later burned in a fire.
- Later Marion County Chapter of Oregon Women Lawyers is named the "Mary Leonard Law Society" in Leonard's honor.

**Possible Angles/Thoughts to Pursue:**

1. Immigration:
  - language issues (she always spoke with an accent and had difficulty writing in English)
  - opportunism -- is she less invested in the idea of "America" and women's rights flowing from the ideals embedded in the Constitution than other early women because she's foreign?
2. Why law?
  - her boarding houses were far more lucrative than her legal career ever was
  - did she just enjoy being a lawyer? Was it because of her early run-in with the law and Hair's courtroom performance?
  - there's no indication that she had hopes that being a police court lawyer would ever make her rich, but she did move to the U.S. to escape poverty
3. Feminism:
  - back to "opportunism" above -- she seems more like Madonna than Patricia Ireland or Gloria Steinem; she's self-promoting, using feminism when it gets her what she wants. Is she a Nietzschean? A pragmatist?
  - was her boarding house really a bordello? Or is that a rumor? Or what is something in between (this is the wild west...)
4. Her legal writings and cases:
  - all the sources I've read are based on newspaper articles about her, so there's more on Leonard as a criminal defendant than Leonard as an attorney
  - maybe go to Portland over winter break and try to dredge something up? There are probably some pleadings or judicial opinions on file somewhere. Or if draft is already long at that point, leave this for the next person?
5. Fred Decker: the leading authority on Leonard, and her great-nephew. The strange thing is, he didn't know he was related to the "famous Mary Leonard" until years after her death -- his grandmother Rosa never told the family. What's going on here?
6. Personal relationships:
  - No children.
  - No evidence of further lovers after Nathaniel Lindsay.
  - Seemed to hang out drinking with male attorneys a lot.
7. Connections to other women
  - No involvement in women's groups that I know of.
  - Did she try to mentor other young women attorneys? Was she supportive?