

# ABORTION IN ENGLAND AND AMERICA

Advances in the fields of surgery, anesthesia and sanitation in the 19th century, along with Victorian morality made abortion (in the English-speaking world) illegal. In 1803, the Malicious Shooting or Stabbing Act stated that it was an offense for anyone to perform or cause an abortion. The punishment for performing a “post-quickening” abortion was the death penalty. The law was later changed (1828 and 1837) to remove the distinction between a late or early pregnancy.

In America in 1800’s there was little regulation regarding abortion. The laws that did exist were based on English common law which allowed for pre-quickening abortions to be a misdemeanor (but those cases were harder to prosecute as only the mother knew when quickening happened). By the 1860’s abortion services were available in New Orleans, New York, Cincinnati, Cleveland and Chicago, with estimates of one abortion for every 4 live births.

In industrialized England, “backstreet abortionists” were fairly common, although their efforts could prove fatal. In 1914, by one estimate, 100,000 women made efforts to procure a miscarriage (usually by drugs).

By the late 1800’s and early 1900’s many pills and drugs were marketed as laxatives for women who were “delayed”, but they were really abortifacients. Drugs such as Beecham’s Pills, Molex Pills and Cote pills.

The “Roaring Twenties” saw the rise of birth control and it is within that context that abortion was pushed to be legalized. Women like Marie Stopes, Margaret Sanger and Stella Brown pushed for abortion for “the working woman” while women like Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony fought against it. Feminists wanted to take their sexual lives into their own hands, which continued after WWII and into the 1960’s.

Somewhere along the line, abortive mothers forgot to love their neighbor as themselves. Perhaps women forgot that they, at one time were helpless babies in the womb. Perhaps they forgot that they trusted their mother for their every need. It’s completely hypocritical for Pro-Choicers to say children are bad, when in fact, they were a child. Their position for stopping children coming into the world is really an argument against their own existence. If their parents practiced what they preached, they wouldn’t be here.

