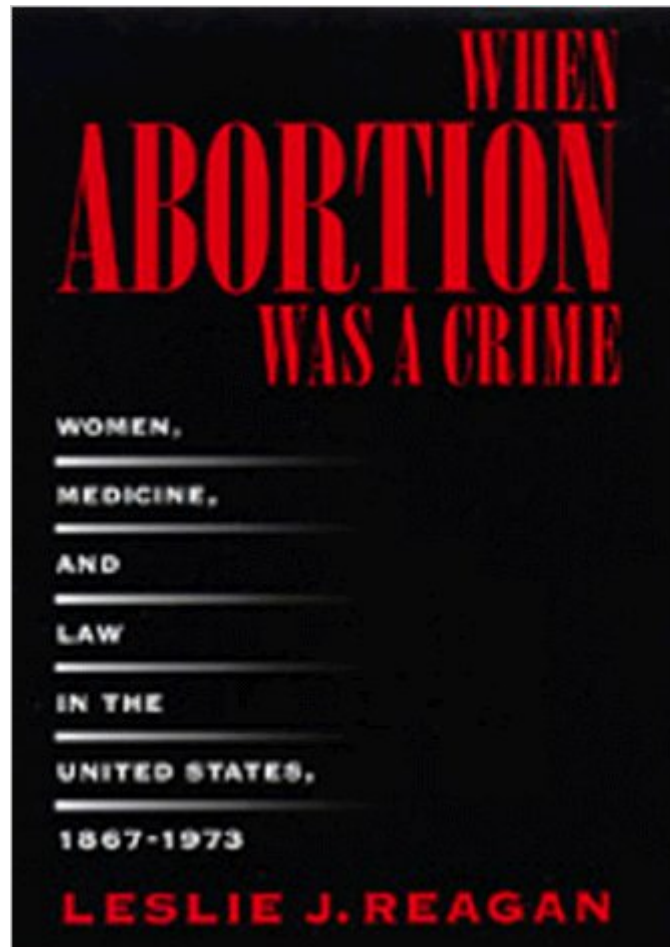


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# When Abortion Was A Crime: Women, Medicine, And Law In The United States, 1867-1973



## Synopsis

As we approach the 30th anniversary of *Roe v. Wade*, it's crucial to look back to the time when abortion was illegal. Leslie Reagan traces the practice and policing of abortion, which although illegal was nonetheless widely available, but always with threats for both doctor and patient. In a time when many young women don't even know that there was a period when abortion was a crime, this work offers chilling and vital lessons of importance to everyone. The linking of the words "abortion" and "crime" emphasizes the difficult and painful history that is the focus of Leslie J. Reagan's important book. Her study is the first to examine the entire period during which abortion was illegal in the United States, beginning in the mid-nineteenth century and ending with *Roe v. Wade* in 1973. Although illegal, millions of abortions were provided during these years to women of every class, race, and marital status. The experiences and perspectives of these women, as well as their physicians and midwives, are movingly portrayed here. Reagan traces the practice and policing of abortion. While abortions have been typically portrayed as grim "back alley" operations, she finds that abortion providers often practiced openly and safely. Moreover, numerous physicians performed abortions, despite prohibitions by the state and the American Medical Association. Women often found cooperative practitioners, but prosecution, public humiliation, loss of privacy, and inferior medical care were a constant threat. Reagan's analysis of previously untapped sources, including inquest records and trial transcripts, shows the fragility of patient rights and raises provocative questions about the relationship between medicine and law. With the right to abortion again under attack in the United States, this book offers vital lessons for every American concerned with health care, civil liberties, and personal and sexual freedom.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

In summary: \*Don't read this book if you are pro-life and you want data to support your beliefs.\* Do read this book if you are pro-choice and you want data to support your beliefs.\* Do read this book if you need to do historical research on abortions and if you need specific examples of how abortions were performed in the early 1900's. \*\*\*\* Most of the reviewers who have given this book a negative review seem to be pro-life and seem to be basing their opinion off of their political beliefs. I can see why they're disappointed. With a title like: *When Abortion Was A Crime*, they were probably expecting something that would support their political beliefs. If you want to read a book to support your pro-life beliefs, don't read this one. It is very obviously pro-choice. Reagan starts off with a premise that although the law and the church were against abortion, women in the general public were not. She covers historical periods both before and after birth control was widely available. Before birth control was available, the majority of women who had abortions were married and already had children. Some of them felt like they had no other option than to abort a child. If they had sex with their husband, they would eventually get pregnant. If they got pregnant, how would they feed their eleventh child? I read this book for a specific reason. I was trying to find out what a woman experienced if she had an abortion in 1910. This book was perfect for that. It talked about the different options she had available (midwives and doctors), the different procedures she could have gone through.

I've just ordered this book, because it's theme is not just history for me, it was a frightening part of my life. When I was a teenager abortion was a crime: and the choices that forced on women was another crime. Two of my young friends got pregnant while in high school, one at 14 and one at 16, "A" students both, they were forced to drop out of high school, marry, and face the world with a 9th and 10th grade education. Oh, the 14 year-old was "allowed" to come back and take her freshman finals: very possibly because a 14 year old, 9 months pregnant, was meant to be a frightening an object lesson, and one that successfully prevented me from having sex until I was 19. Which meant that my first love at 17 left me after a year of frustration for both of us. Another of my friends was sent to Arizona to live with her Aunt for her "asthma" -- I now believe to have a baby in a home for unwed mothers. Which was another object lesson in our town, a home for unwed mothers, from which troops of teenage unwed mothers marched to the local mall together. To a lower-middle class

girl like myself, sex was frightening, because it meant I might not escape the fate of my friends" a furnished basement "apartment" in their parents's home, a new baby, a teenage husband, and no education. When I made it to state college, I began to have sex with another long-term boyfriend, still frightened, watching another friend get pregnant at 19, and drop out of college for another baby and teenage husband. My fear was only partly relieved by a local campus character we all called "Crazy Charlie" for what-seemed to be tall tales of his exploits. But I was ready to take on face value what Crazy Charlie said one day: that he knew a doctor in Philadelphia, who would perform an abortion for \$200.

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