

WOMEN IN DELAWARE INDUSTRIES

PART I

INTRODUCTION

Early in 1924 the Women's Bureau of the United States Department of Labor was asked by the Labor Commission of Delaware to make a survey in that State of the wages and hours of women workers. The request received not only the indorsement of the Delaware Council of Social Agencies, an association made up of some 30 organizations which are working for the social welfare of the State, but also the approval of several civic leaders.

Following its policy of cooperating whenever possible with State departments of labor, the Women's Bureau undertook the survey, and for two months in the late summer and early fall of 1924 its agents were busy securing data from which statistical tables afterwards were drawn up. State officials, and especially inspectors of the State department of labor, by their cooperation greatly facilitated the work of the survey. Due credit is likewise extended to the employers, who in almost every instance gave free access to their records, a courtesy which made possible the collection of data presented in this bulletin.

In area Delaware is the second smallest State in the Union, and it is third lowest as regards population. Industrially, at least as far as women are concerned, it is not prominent, for according to the 1920 census only 20.8 per cent of all females 10 years of age and over were found to be gainfully employed; of these, 35.2 per cent were in domestic and personal service; 21 per cent in clerical and the same proportion in manufacturing and mechanical pursuits; 9.1 per cent and 8.1 per cent in professional service and trade, respectively; while 5.5 per cent were in agriculture, extraction of minerals, transportation, and public service combined.¹ Almost two-thirds (64.3 per cent) of the 18,102 women whose occupations were thus reported in the last census were in the major groups—domestic and personal service, trade, and manufacture—wherein appeared all occupations included in the present study. The bureau's agents secured wage data for one-fourth (25.7 per cent) of the women in these three groups, and this proportion

¹U. S. Bureau of the Census. Fourteenth census: 1920. v. 4, Population. Occupations, pp. 56-73.