

# Kentuckians and Civic Action



Kentucky Gov. John Y. Brown, Kentucky Historical Society

## ***Married Women's Property Act***

In 1894, Gov. John Y. Brown signed the Married Women's Property Act into law.

Pushed by the Kentucky Equal Rights Association (KERA) and suffragist Josephine Henry, it ended the practice of husbands having legal ownership of their wives' property. The law also made married women the owner of their earned wages and gave them control of real estate.

When the bill was signed into law, Henry said it was ending "fossilized ignorance, selfishness and tyranny."

Henry and the KERA faced criticism for their work. The *Owensboro Messenger* referred to the KERA as "old crowing hens," while the *Stanford Interior-Journal* called Henry "the woman suffrage screecher."

The law, however, made future reforms inevitable. The *Louisville Courier-Journal* said it "whets the appetite for other reforms," and that it "is regarded as the first step toward women suffrage."