

# Nena Jolidon Croake



## Quick Facts

- Birth:** 1865  
Illinois
- Death:** 1934  
Los Angeles, California
- Occupation:** Doctor of Osteopathy
- Party Affiliation:** Progressive
- Years served:** 1913-1915
- Office:** Representative
- District:** 37 (Pierce County)

## Personal:

- Around 1890 she was married to John B. Croake in Victoria, B.C. He was a former Pierce County Deputy Sheriff, and former District Customs Collector in Victoria. He died during her term in office and she did not file for re-election.
- May have been the first woman doctor in Pierce County (Morgan)
- “One of her great-grandfathers was a French volunteer in the US War of Independence. After he returned to France as a teacher, he was made Mayor of Vauthiermont, but was killed by Prussian invaders. His son immigrated to the US in 1826 with two children. Mary (Nena) was a daughter of Dorcas A. Thompson (1836, Indiana) and Francis J Jolidon (b. 1825), who married on April 3, 1856 in Hancock County, Illinois.” (Vytlacilova)
- Left Tacoma in 1923

## Education:

- She may have been trained as an osteopath by Dr. Everett Sommer, a Tacoma neighbor. (Morgan)

## Community Service:

## Affiliations:

- Tacoma Women’s Study Club, founder, president, 1899-1902

## Awards:

## Legislative & State Service:

- One of two women first elected to the Washington State Legislature
- During her successful campaign she ran against 5 male candidates. She used women’s networks forged during the suffrage campaign and also appeared at public debates.

- Campaign slogan: “Consideration for Women is a Measure of the Nation’s Progress.” Murray Morgan, in an un-cited source, quotes Nena Jolidon Croake as saying, “Now that woman is enfranchised it is only just and fair that she be given a trial. If she fails it will be no greater crime than it is for the man that sits by her side, and we know that men have not always made a success in law making. In going to the Legislature, I will make but few promises, but this I will say: I am willing and eager to learn and will always be found at my post, doing the very best my conscience dictates.”
- Her election was challenged by a rival candidate who complained she—as one of the first women drivers in Tacoma—had violated the rule against campaigning at the tolling station when she had driven seven friends to the poll. Her victory was certified when she explained that her friends were already committed to her and she had no need to persuade them and so was not campaigning. (Morgan)
- Focused on child labor laws, opposition to capital punishment, supported vocational training in public schools, establishment of juvenile courts
- Also, campaigned for minimum wages for women, a retirement fund for teachers, and the mother’s pension bill

**Committees: (1913)** Education; Medicine, Surgery, Dentistry and Hygiene; Mines and Mining; Miscellaneous; State Soldiers’ and Veterans’ Homes

**House Bills sponsored:  
(1913 session)**

1-Providing for a minimum wage to be paid women and girls

Went to second reading.

566- Relating to the employment and wages of females

Went to first reading.

**Leadership, Positions & Appointments:**

- President of the Washington Equal Suffrage Society, 1900-1902
- Active in the 1910 campaign for suffrage with Emma Smith Devoe

**Sources:**

Articles:

- Morgan, Murray C., “Nena Jolidon-Croake, Mystery Feminist of Tacoma,” *The Tacoma News Tribune*, August 4, 1994
- Whitney, Marci, “From Clubhouses to Mountaintops,” *The News Tribune*, May 2, 1976, sec. E3
- “France Takes Note of Washington Woman,” *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, February 23, 1913, sec. 3, pg. 8

Books:

- Whitney, Marci. *Notable Women*. Tacoma News Tribune, Tacoma, 1977

Web:

- Vytlačilova, Lenka, “Women in Medicine,” Sunshine for Women, <http://www.pinn.net/~sunshine/czech/medicine.html>