

History's INCREDIBLE GLOWING WOMEN



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1917 - Radium Dial is founded by Joseph A. Kelly

1922 - Mollie Maggia, 24, is the first dial painter to die at the United States Radium Co. Her jaw falls away from her skull. This information is kept from the employees of Radium Dial, and her cause of death is listed as syphilis.

1925 - Radium Dial hits the height of their production. They employ over 1,000 young women. That same year, The New York Times runs an article titled "New Radium Disease Found; Has Killed 5"

1927 - Radium Dial workers in Illinois begin seeking compensation for their suffering. They will spend the next ten years fighting. Illinois papers describe them as "15 Walking Ghosts Jilted by Justice"

1939 - After innumerable appeals Radium Dial is forced to admit defeat in court. Illinois Radium Girls had already won their case eight times before Radium Dial was finally forced to pay.



*"The glow I fell in love with.
That glow that killed her.
That'll kill me one day too."*

The history of radium is hardly an unfamiliar story. Bright young women, their lives just beginning, go into the world determined to succeed, to do good, and in the end they are punished for it.

Marie Curie successfully isolates a brand new element: radioactive radium. She becomes the first woman to ever win the Nobel Prize. The only woman to ever win two. She establishes field radiography with the goal of saving soldiers' lives. Then her discovery kills her.

The young women of Radium Dial go to work; some for the sake of their families, some for themselves. This new line of work is exciting. It pays more than the jobs usually offered to women and they're respected for helping the war effort. After the war, they're told it's a privilege to work so closely with the miracle of radium.

Then, slowly, they see their friends begin to fall ill. They feel their bones begin to weaken. And then, one by one, they start to die.

Grace Fryer, Edna Hussman, Katherine Schaub, Quinta McDonald, and Albina Larice. The Radium Girls. Only five women, but representing countless more who would never have their stories heard. It took years to find a lawyer willing to represent them, years more to win their case. Their indomitable spirits and dedication to their cause lead to permanent changes in the rights of employees everywhere.

We're still benefiting from the sacrifices of these women. Theirs is the first case in which an employer was held responsible for their employees' health. They didn't just have to fight laws, they had to change them. At the time, the statute of limitations prohibited them from seeking compensation for the ways their employer had damaged their health, and so they had to challenge the law itself.

Within five years of the eventual settlement, all five of the core radium girls were dead.