

National History Day 2020  
Breaking Barriers in History  
New Jersey Topics

1. The development of a system of canals and railroads in New Jersey in the early nineteenth century overcame transportation barriers, transforming the state economy and everyday life. What were some of the results, both positive and negative of these developments?
2. Educational opportunities for New Jersey girls opened up in the early nineteenth century with the establishment of private academies in the state. What was the impact of this development and what barriers remained in women's education?
3. Reformer Dorothea Dix (1802–1887) overcame many barriers to found what the Trenton Psychiatric Hospital in 1848. What type of challenges did Dix face? What were the limits of her vision?
4. John A. Roebling of Trenton and his son Washington broke barriers in construction through the invention of steel wire rope and their pioneering design of the Brooklyn Bridge. How did they break these barriers? What price did they pay? What were the long-term effects on the construction industry?
5. In the 1880s and 1890s, New Jersey passed liberal incorporation laws, which allowed firms to escape legal barriers to multi-state operation, and resulted in greater concentration of wealth in the state. What were the long-term consequences of these laws, both positive and negative?
6. In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, Thomas Edison overcame communications barriers through his invention of the telegraph in his New Jersey laboratory? What was the impact of this invention on the New Jersey economy and society?
7. Mary Philbrook (1872–1958) was the first woman to be admitted to the New Jersey Bar in 1895. How did Philbrook overcome this barrier? What obstacles remained for women in the practice of the law?
8. No public baccalaureate education for women existed in New Jersey until the foundation of New Jersey College for Women, later Douglass College, in 1918. What was the impact of this educational opportunity? What barriers to higher education remained for women in New Jersey?
9. Women gained the right to vote in the Nineteenth Amendment of 1920. How did New Jersey women help break this barrier? What barriers for women remained after the passage of the amendment?

10. As well as granting women the right to vote, the Nineteenth Amendment allowed women to hold political office. How did the early women who served in the state legislature break barriers? What barriers remained?
11. Mary Norton (1875–1959) was the first woman to represent New Jersey in the U.S. House of Representatives. What barriers did Norton overcome to gain this position? What was the impact of her service in the U.S. Congress?
12. The National Labor Relations Act of 1935 broke barriers to union organizing. What were the long-term effects, both positive and negative, of this legislation in the state of New Jersey?
13. Dorothy Cross (1906–1972) was New Jersey’s first State Archaeologist. As well as breaking barriers for women, she helped develop the study of the Delaware Indians in New Jersey and the State Museum. What was the impact of Dorothy Cross’s pioneering career?
14. During the Second World War, women and African Americans broke barriers in the workplace, finding employment in science, technology, and industry. How did they break these barriers? Were these long-term gains?
15. In 1945, New Jersey passed statewide fair employment legislation barring discrimination on the basis of race, ethnicity, and religion. For example, in 1946, Newark City Hospital opened its doors to African American physicians and nurses. Why was this legislation passed? What other institutions were affected?
16. Selman A. Waksman, a Rutgers University professor of Microbiology, is best known for the discovery of streptomycin, which earned him the Nobel Prize in 1952. How did Waksman’s discovery break barriers in the treatment of tuberculosis and lead to further advancements in science? What barriers still exist in the treatment of this disease?
17. A union official who helped found the National Negro Labor Council, Ernest Thompson (1907–1971) was also a community activist who helped bring about political and economic gains for African Americans in New Jersey. How did Thompson break barriers for African Americans in the labor movement?
18. The Immigration and Naturalization Act of 1965, also known as the Hart-Celler Act, abolished an earlier quota system based on national origin and established a new immigration policy based on reuniting immigrant families and attracting skilled labor to the United States. How did this legislation break barriers against immigration? What was the impact on New Jersey families? What were the long-term effects in the state?
19. Rutgers College became coeducational in 1972. How did women come to be admitted to Rutgers and what additional barriers did they encounter? What was the long-term impact of this change?