The single most chilling and most unforgettable artifact that I have ever found in any archives is a candy tin at the Oregon State Archives. It was part of an Oregon Supreme Court case file of exhibits for State v. Chase, argued in 1922. I was researching the case because it tested the constitutionality of Oregon's 1921 law admitting women to jury service. The law was unique because it provided that half of a jury had to be women in cases where women were defendants or where women or children were witnesses. Supporters had argued that a woman's presence and perspective were especially important in these cases. J.J. Chase, a sixty-year-old man, was charged with raping a nine-year-old girl in Lane County. His lawyers argued that the process of selecting juries under the new system was burdensome. The Oregon Supreme Court upheld his conviction and the constitutionality of the women's jury law.

The candy tin was what Chase used to lure the young girl to a secluded spot to rape her. I opened the tissue-wrapped object in the exhibit file and saw the weathered and battered candy tin. I felt an overwhelming sense of connection with the young girl and the betrayal and violence she experienced almost hundred years ago. I can't get the candy tin out of my mind. To me, it symbolizes in such stark terms why Oregon women insisted on being a part of the political and judicial process and having a voice in the courts.

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