Suffrage Outside! is a part of “Where Women Made History,” the National Trust’s multi-year initiative to recognize and protect historic places that showcase the vision, courage, and leadership of generations of women. Learn more and support our efforts at savingsplaces.org/womens-history

The Woodrow Wilson House
A Site of the National Trust for Historic Preservation
OUTSIDE THE HOME

Prospective Teachers: Learn to do by Doing

With expanding access to higher education, by 1910 women were nearly 40% of professional teachers in America. African-American women, trained at schools such as Spelman Seminary, which opened in 1881, made up 33% of the teaching force and faced discrimination in hiring and pay.

Shaping Public Policy

Representative Jeannette Rankin Leaving the White House

In 1916, Jeannette Rankin became the first woman elected to Congress. Montana recognized women’s suffrage in 1914. As a suffragist and social worker, Rankin’s career shows how American women worked to shape public policy regarding aid to the poor, improved public education, housing and labor reform, and Temperance.

Factory Workers

Garment Workers On Strike, 1909

Rapid industrialization prompted a wave of immigration between 1880-1920. Immigrant women worked in factories under harsh conditions, for long hours and low wages. In 1909, garment workers in New York City launched the largest strike of female workers to-date. Suffragists like Alice Paul would draw inspiration from their protest tactics in the fight for suffrage.

Part of Her Outfit

Sash,别针 at the National Women’s Party headquarters

The National Women’s Party made a point to have women for every position, from leadership to messengers. Part of the public campaign for suffrage was the activists’ ritual dressing of hats, buttons, and sashes to showcase their cause as they navigated American city streets.

OUTSIDE THE WHITE HOUSE

Wilson on Election Day

Picketing Wilson’s White House

One of the most effective but controversial NWP tactics was the 1917 picketing campaign outside the White House. Alice Paul, Lucy Burns, and the NWP directed their efforts at Wilson and his refusal to support a constitutional amendment.

Many picketers were arrested and their broken windows and smashed entrances in patented — minus force-feeding during hunger strikes — were widely publicized, sparking outrage in Wilson’s administration and garnering support for suffrage causes.

The treatment of these women and the attention they brought forced Wilson’s hand to support a national amendment. Though he would not engage with the picketers from the NWP, their militancy made negotiations with the more moderate Carrie Chapman Catt and the NAWSA more palatable to the President.

Wilson Votes for Suffrage in New Jersey

Though he opposed a constitutional amendment, Wilson voted in favor of suffrage in a New Jersey state election on October 6, 1917. Here is the poem he composed:

National League for Women’s Service

Ballot for the Vote

Male and female alike, we clamor to be heard,

The Nation we serve needs our service,

Let every citizen hear and vote,

The right to vote is the right to live.

Wilson Votes Over There!

Women Vote Under These Flags

Proposition 8 suffragists were adept at circulating effective propaganda. This 1915 poster was meant to pressure the United States to live up to its wartime promise of “Making the World Safe for Democracy.”

The poster announced that only when America recognized women’s right to vote could it truly be a symbol of democracy for the world.

International Advisors

Passage of the 19th Amendment did not end the battle for equality, and international alliances remained vital. Alice Paul established the NWP International Advisory Council in 1923. The council’s founding members — Mrs. Patrick-Lawrence of England, Mademoiselle Hulea Chantre of Egypt, and Madame Coletier of Egypt — along with Mrs. Elizabeth Culbertson of Meadville, Pennsylvania — are pictured in 1924 at NWP Headquarters in Washington, D.C.

Mobilizing for War Outside the United States

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Making Their Voices Heard…in Union

Vote for Women: International Suffragists’ Song

As suffragists marched on Washington or down Fifth Avenue, picketed outside, and convened at newspaper offices, they amplified their message in music. A 1918 Ed Mellor song proclaimed that with suffrage, women would “try for better days, to rule the world they could only get…then peace no doubt would reign throughout all the lands.”

Feeding a Nation in Wartime

Agricultural labor was vital to wartime mobilization. Women were encouraged to join the Land Army to harvest and conserve food. White-privileged white women were featured on recruitment posters, immigrant and African American women among them, washed dishes, sewed, and held most of the farm labor.

OUTSIDE IN THE STREETS

Voting Rights for All

Mary Church Terrell

Mary Church Terrell was among the most prominent civil rights activists and suffragists of the Progressive Era. The daughter of former enslaved parents, she earned both a B.A. and an M.A. at Oberlin College. In 1896, she became a founding member of the National Association of Colored Women (NACW) and in 1909 of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP).

Lifting as We Climb

The slogan for the National Association of Colored Women (NACW), “Lifting as We Climb,” captured the belief of African American suffragists that women’s right to vote was part of a broader fight for equality and civil rights for the African American community. Black women suffragists brought focus to the intersection of racial and gender equality.

Immigrant Women

Fight for the Vote

Mabel Ping Hua Lee immigrated to America from China in 1906 and became an active suffragist while attending Barnard College. Even after ratification of the 19th Amendment, however, she could not vote because the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act — repealed in 1943— barred Chinese immigrants from becoming American citizens. Immigrant women were vital to the suffrage movement. Many immigrants were laborers who brought their own labor skills to the cause, which often left them outside the middle-class mainstream of the suffrage movement.

Help Her Carry On!

National League for Women’s Service

Suffrage in New Jersey

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International Women’s Suffrage League

The International Women’s Suffrage Alliance was established in Washington, D.C., in 1909. With members from the U.S., Europe, and South America, the alliance met annually and worked to ensure that “(i)n any representative form of government, women should be vested with all political rights and privileges of electors.” This poster advertised the last meeting, held in Budapest, before the outbreak of WWI.

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