**Significant Dates in Women’s Struggle for Emancipation and Suffrage**

1832 *The Great Reform Act* gave the vote to men who owned or rented property worth £10 or more annually. Thus about one-fifth of all men could vote. The Act specifically excluded women. By substituting the term “male person” for the first time in English history in lieu of the word “man” as in earlier acts, women were legally prevented from voting.

1851 Harriet Taylor and John Stuart Mill published “The Enfranchisement of Women” in the *Westminster Review*.

1866 John Stuart Mill and Henry Fawcett presented to the House of Commons a petition for extension of the franchise to all male and female householders. It was drafted and signed by 1,499 prominent women.

1867 *The Second Reform Act* doubled the electorate by giving the vote to almost all working men. Mill attempted to include a franchise for women in the bill but his amendment was defeated by 196 to73 votes.

The first women’s suffrage societies were founded in Manchester, London, and Edinburgh.

1868 Judges in a legal case ruled that, although the word “man” in an Act of Parliament must be held to include women, “this did not apply to the privileges granted by the State.” Thus the same words in the Act of Parliament that applied only to men concerning the vote, for the purposes of taxation included women.

Women’s suffrage societies were founded in Bristol and Birmingham.

1869 JS Mill published *The Subjection of Women.*

Girton College, Cambridge, was established as the first residential college for women.

1870 Dr. Richard Pankhurst drafted the first Women’s Suffrage Bill. Between 1879 and 1914, 28 unsuccessful suffrage bills were drafted.

1871 Newnham College, Cambridge, was founded. Women were not allowed the same degrees as men until 1949.

1872 The London School of Medicine for Women opened.

1873 *Custody of Infants Act*: all women after divorce or separation were allowed access to their children. Women could be awarded custody of their children up to age 16.

1880 William Gladstone became Prime Minister.

1882 Second *Married Women’s Property Act* was passed, protecting married women’s separate property. Women could retain what they owned at the time of marriage & keep some of their earnings. The bill was authored by Richard Pankhurst.

1884 The *Third Reform Act* entitled about 5 million men in all (nearly two-thirds of the male population) to vote. Those who could not vote included criminals and patients in lunatic asylums. Gladstone opposed the amendment to include women’s suffrage in the Reform Bill and thus it was defeated.

1886 A group of wealthy and titled women in opposition to women’s suffrage signed and published “An Appeal Against Female Suffrage” in the *Nineteenth Century*.

1897 The National Union of Women’s Suffrage Societies (NUWSS) was formed by uniting various suffrage societies from around England under the leadership of Millicent Fawcett.

1903 The Women’s Social and Political Union (WSPU) was formed by Emmeline Pankhurst and her family in Manchester. Its motto was “Deeds Not Words.”

1905 First militant incident: on October 13, Christabel Pankhurst and Annie Kenney were arrested for their protest at a Liberal meeting at the Free Trade Hall in Manchester which was attended by Winston Churchill and Sir Edward Grey. They chose imprisonment rather than pay a fine.

1907 Three senior members broke away from WSPU to form the Women’s Freedom League (WFL), also militant but democratic.

*Votes for Women*, the official publication of the WSPU, was begun with Frederick and Emmeline Pethick-Lawrence as joint editors.

1908 Anti-suffragist Herbert Asquith became Prime Minister.

Window breaking began with attack on windows at No. 10 Downing Street.

The Women Writers’ Suffrage League (WWSL) and the Actresses’ Franchise League (AFL) were formed, agreeing to be neutral in regard to suffrage tactics.

1910 King Edward VII died. A Conciliation Bill was introduced to give women a limited franchise. PM Asquith killed the bill. On Black Friday (November 18) a WSPU deputation to Parliament was met with great police brutality; 120 women were arrested.

1911 Second Conciliation Bill failed. Suffragettes smashed the windows of government and private offices and West End shops. More than 200 women arrested. Window smashing was now WSPU policy.

1912 March: The police raided WSPU headquarters, arresting the Pethick-Lawrences. Christabel Pankhurst fled to Paris and stayed there until the war began.

October: The Pethick-Lawrences were expelled from the WSPU taking with them *Votes for Women.* Christabel and Emmeline Pankhurst began the paper *The Suffragette*.

1913 April: *Prisoner’s Temporary Discharge for Ill Health Act* (known as the Cat and Mouse Act) was passed.

June: Emily Wilding Davison killed at Epson horse race. WSPU staged a spectacular funeral procession through the streets of London.

1914 Sylvia Pankhurst was expelled from the WSPU and formed the East London Federation of Suffragettes.

March: Mary Richardson attacked the *Rokeby* *Venus*, a painting by Velasquez at the National Gallery in London. Many art galleries and museums were now closed to the public or open only to men.

August: With the outbreak of WWI, the WSPU ended its militancy and on August 1 the government released all WSPU prisoners.

1918 *The Representation of People Act* gave the vote to women 30 and over if they were householders, the wives of householders, occupiers of property with an annual rent of £5, or graduates of British universities. About 8½ million women were able to vote in the 1918 election. All men 21 and over were given the vote.

1919  *Sex Disqualification Removal Act* opened all the professions (except the Church) to women. They could now become MPs, solicitors, barristers, and magistrates, as well as serve on juries. Lady Nancy Astor became the first woman MP (taking a seat left vacant by her husband when became a member of the House of Lords) although Countess Markiewicz was the first woman to win a place in Parliament on her own right. (She was not allowed to take her seat because as a member of Sinn Fein she refused to take the oath of allegiance.)

1928 *Equal Franchisement Act* gave the vote to all women 21 and over.

Emmeline Pankhurst died.

1929 Women constituted 52.7 percent of the electorate in the General Election; 14 women were Members of Parliament.

Millicent Fawcett died.

1930 On March 6, a statue of Emmeline Pankhurst was unveiled outside the Houses of Parliament.

1958 Women admitted to the House of Lords.

1969 All men and women over 18 given the vote.

**Suffrage Organizations**

**AFL**: The Actresses’ Franchise League was formed in 1908 by a group of actresses who called on the government to enfranchise women immediately. The actresses supported all suffrage societies and took no position on tactics. They had a repertoire of short one-act plays, written by a variety of people, which they performed in various locations around England. These plays were meant to convert women to the suffrage cause.

**ASL**: The Artists’ Suffrage League was founded in 1907. It produced posters, post cards, illustrated leaflets, and banners for marches.

**East London Federation of the WSPU**: A democratic organization that worked among the poor and working classes in the East End of London, it was led by Sylvia Pankhurst. She was expelled from the WSPU by Christabel and Emmeline Pankhurst in 1914. It opposed the war.

**The Men’s League for Women’s Suffrage**: Formed in 1907, it included clergymen, writers, academics, lawyers, and political leaders who supported women’s suffrage. It favored a peaceful approach to gaining the vote.

**NUWSS**: The National Union of Women’s Suffrage Societies, the largest suffrage organization in England, was formed in 1897 when women’s suffrage groups all over England joined together. It was a democratic organization with Millicent Fawcett as its elected leader. It was nonmilitant in its approach, seeking to gain the vote by constitutional methods on the same terms as men. Its members were called suffragists. Its colors were red and white and, after 1909, green was added.

**WFL**: The Women’s Freedom League was established in 1907 by WSPU members who broke away to form a more democratically run organization. Although it was a militant organization, its members did not participate in the violence of the WSPU. Its colors were green, white, and gold.

**WSPU**: The Women’s Social and Political Union was formed in 1903 in Manchester under the leadership of Emmeline Pankhurst and her daughter Christabel. It did not support any political party and only women were allowed to be members. Under the Pankhursts the organization became increasingly autocratic. The WSPU was the militant wing of the suffrage movement, having as its motto “Deeds, Not Words.” Its members were called suffragettes. Its official organ was *Votes for Women* until 1912; then, until 1915, it was *The Suffragette*, edited by Christabel Pankhurst. Its colors were purple, white, and green.

**WWSL**: The Women Writers’ Suffrage League, founded in 1908 by Cicely Hamilton and Bessie Hatton, included in its membership many well-known writers. It was neutral in regard to suffrage tactics. Members used their writing to secure the vote for women on the same terms as men. Its colors were black, white, and gold.