The Women’s Museum of California was founded as the Women’s History Reclamation Project in 1983 by Mary Maschal. Originally an archival project, Maschal worked diligently to collect and preserve artifacts that demonstrated the history and experiences of women, especially here in San Diego and California. She shared her knowledge through speaking engagements and, in 1995, she opened her home to the public where she curated her vast collection to growing audiences. The community’s enthusiastic response to her exhibit open house exhibits demonstrated the need in San Diego for a museum dedicated to women and their stories.

In 2012, the newly christened Women’s Museum of California moved to the Arts District Liberty Station where it thrives today. The WMC maintains Mary’s legacy and passion for preserving women’s history by educating people about women’s experiences and contributions through an active calendar of originally curated exhibits, educational programs, and community events.

COME JOIN US!
Today, the right to vote is something that American women often take for granted. Yet, generations of courageous women struggled over the course of decades to bring about a constitutional amendment granting woman that right. From its first stirrings before the Civil War to its final victory in 1920, suffrage was the largest reform movement in American history. The fight was led by impassioned leaders such as Susan B. Anthony, Alice Paul, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, and Ida B. Wells-Barnett, and carried out by millions of women. They made speeches, signed petitions, marched in parades, dropped leaflets from airplanes, and argued over and over again that women, like men, deserve full citizenship and have an inalienable right to participate in the democratic process. Here are just a few of the women who came before and helped win the right to cast your ballot today.

CELEBRATING the 19th AMENDMENT

TO WHOM DO WE OWE OUR RIGHT to VOTE?

Hard as it may be to believe today, the idea of women participating in the affairs of the nation was once a truly radical one. In later years, when the decision was made to adopt more militant tactics in the push for suffrage than unsuccessful lobbying and lecturing, suffragists needed real courage to press the fight.

Susan B. Anthony was arrested and jailed after attempting to vote in 1872. When women took to the streets in the thousands on the eve of World War I, they were attacked by mobs and hundreds were injured. In 1917, white-garbed “Sentinels of Liberty” picketed the White House and 500 women were arrested. Picketers were jailed for the crime of “obstructing sidewalk traffic” and hunger strikes were countered by feedings with tubes forced down the throats of resistant women.

Ultimately, public outrage led to a change in political attitudes. President Woodrow Wilson, formerly an opponent, was converted to the cause during the Great War and urged support: “We have made partners of the women in this war... Shall we admit then only to a partnership of suffering and sacrifice and toil and not to a partnership of privilege and right?”

The 19th Amendment, giving women full voting rights, was finally adopted by Congress on June 4, 1919. Fourteen months later, Tennessee became the 36th state to ratify the amendment (by a single vote) and it became law.
Any great change must expect opposition because it shakes the very foundation of privilege.

— Lucretia Coffin Mott
For fifty years, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, abolitionist, temperance advocate, and author, was at the forefront of the fight for women’s equality and voting rights. When even the idealistic cause of abolition denied participation to women, Lucretia Mott and Elizabeth Cady Stanton vowed to start their own crusade.

Their small newspaper announcement of a meeting called for a gathering in Seneca Falls, New York, and the agenda set on July 19, 1848, would be one that preoccupied activist women for the next seven decades: the idea of freedom and voting rights for all.

**The best protection any woman can have ... is courage.**
— Elizabeth Cady Stanton, from her 1898 autobiography
*Eighty Years and More*

**THAT ALL MEN and WOMEN ARE CREATED EQUAL**

Even while raising seven children, Stanton was a dedicated campaigner. Stanton’s *Declaration of Sentiments*, delivered in 1848 at the Seneca Falls Convention argued for equal rights that included women’s right to vote, divorce, gain custody of their children, keep their wages and inheritance, attend college, and work as a doctor, attorney, or minister. The Declaration won approval from attendees and launched the beginning of the suffrage movement.

In 1851, Stanton met Susan B. Anthony, an advocate of temperance, abolition, and equal pay and the two began a 50-year collaboration that shaped the women’s movement through speeches and widely circulated articles and books. Anthony’s organization and campaigning abilities proved a perfect complement to Stanton’s eloquence.

Lydia Flood Jackson’s parents were some of the earliest African Americans to settle in California. Suffragist, business woman, and clubwoman, Jackson worked both on the national and California suffrage campaigns. She traveled throughout Latin America and the West Indies giving speeches promoting democracy and women’s rights. Jackson also urged women to question white male supremacy and demand suffrage, encouraging women to challenge gender stereotypes that limited them from achieving their full potential.

Carrie Chapman Catt took her first step as a political activist in 1886 when she joined the Iowa Woman Suffrage Association. She soon served as a delegate to the newly formed National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA). A dynamic speaker and tenacious organizer, by 1900, Catt succeeded the 80-year-old activist Susan B. Anthony as its president. She took the fight for women’s rights to the world stage, organizing the International Woman’s Suffrage Association in 1902. Her relentless campaigning won Woodrow Wilson’s respect and support, and ultimately led to passage of the 19th Amendment granting women the right to vote. Months before ratification, Catt founded the League of Women Voters, to give American women guidance in using their new franchise.

Investigative journalist, women’s rights activist, and anti-lynching crusader Ida B. Wells-Barnett’s role in the suffrage movement was inextricably linked to her lifelong crusade against racism, violence and discrimination towards African Americans. Her views were both pragmatic and political. She saw enfranchisement as a way for black women to become politically involved in their communities and to use their votes to elect African Americans, regardless of gender, to influential political offices. At the 1913 Woman’s Suffrage Procession white suffragists refused to let her march with the Illinois delegation and was instead told women of color were to march at the back. Wells refused to be intimidated and marched at the front of the line, appearing on the cover of *Chicago Tribune*.