

Women's Suffrage Memorabilia

During the Women's Suffrage movement, supporters were encouraged to wear physical representations of their convictions in the form of buttons, sashes, ribbons, jewelry, badges, etc.

These are some examples from the Lisa Unger Baskin Collection of American and British suffrage pins. Common color schemes were gold/yellow and purple/green/white.



Suffrage Buttons



Woman Suffrage Buttons

One of the more popular forms of suffrage artifacts was the button or badge. Most of the larger and many of the smaller organizations produced buttons of some sort, generally emblazoned with their official colors. While some of these buttons were generic, they often were manufactured for a particular campaign such as the 1911 campaign in California or the Empire State Campaign in New York. There are period references to the fact that many suffragists collected them and advertised for varieties that they did not have. Moreover, many suffrage buttons embody interesting stories about their creation, their slogans, and their general use. Here are a few examples.



The **Ballots for Both** button was the winning entry in a contest sponsored by the National American Woman Suffrage Association. Dr. Eleanor M. Hiestand-Moore of Philadelphia coined the phrase when she was campaigning in her home city in 1915. She had confronted an angry Italian immigrant, who, misinterpreting the cry of “Votes for Women,” assumed that the suffragists were attempting to deny him the vote because he was a man. Her response to avoid such confusion in the future was to promote this substitute slogan. Although NAWSA printed the slogan into the form of a pin, it never really caught on as a major campaign theme.



The idea behind the slogan **I am a Voter** came from Jeanette Rankin of Montana, who was the first female elected to Congress. Rankin believed that the button might have special resonance at the Panama-Pacific Exposition of 1915 if worn by women from those Western States where women had the right to vote. The idea was “to make the visitors from the conservative Eastern States realize, though visual aid, there are thousands and thousands of well-groomed, happy, sensible women who actually vote.”

The **Clarion** button pictured here was the product of the Women’s Political Union, formed by Harriot Stanton Blatch, daughter of Elizabeth Cady Stanton. It employs the purple, green, and white colors of Emmeline Pankhurst’s English organization, the Women’s Social and Political Union, and adapts the “Bugler Girl” design created by Caroline Watts for the National Union of Women Suffrage Societies. The button’s colorful nature and its militant figure reflect the more activist approach to suffrage on the part of the WPU as opposed to that of its more conservative counterpart, the National American Woman Suffrage Association. This pin comes in two varieties, one with a twelve starred flag and the other with thirteen, indicating the number of suffrage states at the time. Earlier, the WPU used a design that was closer to Watt’s original, consisting of four distinct varieties, one with five stars, one with six, one with eleven, and a smaller pin where the tag line of “Votes for Women” was replaced by that of “Equal Suffrage” and which contained ten stars on the suffrage flag.



Samples of pins made at East Library

