

# Suffragettes

*From the day when Canada became a nation (July 1, 1867) the struggle of women to gain the right to vote has been part of our history.*



Dr. Emily Howard Stowe

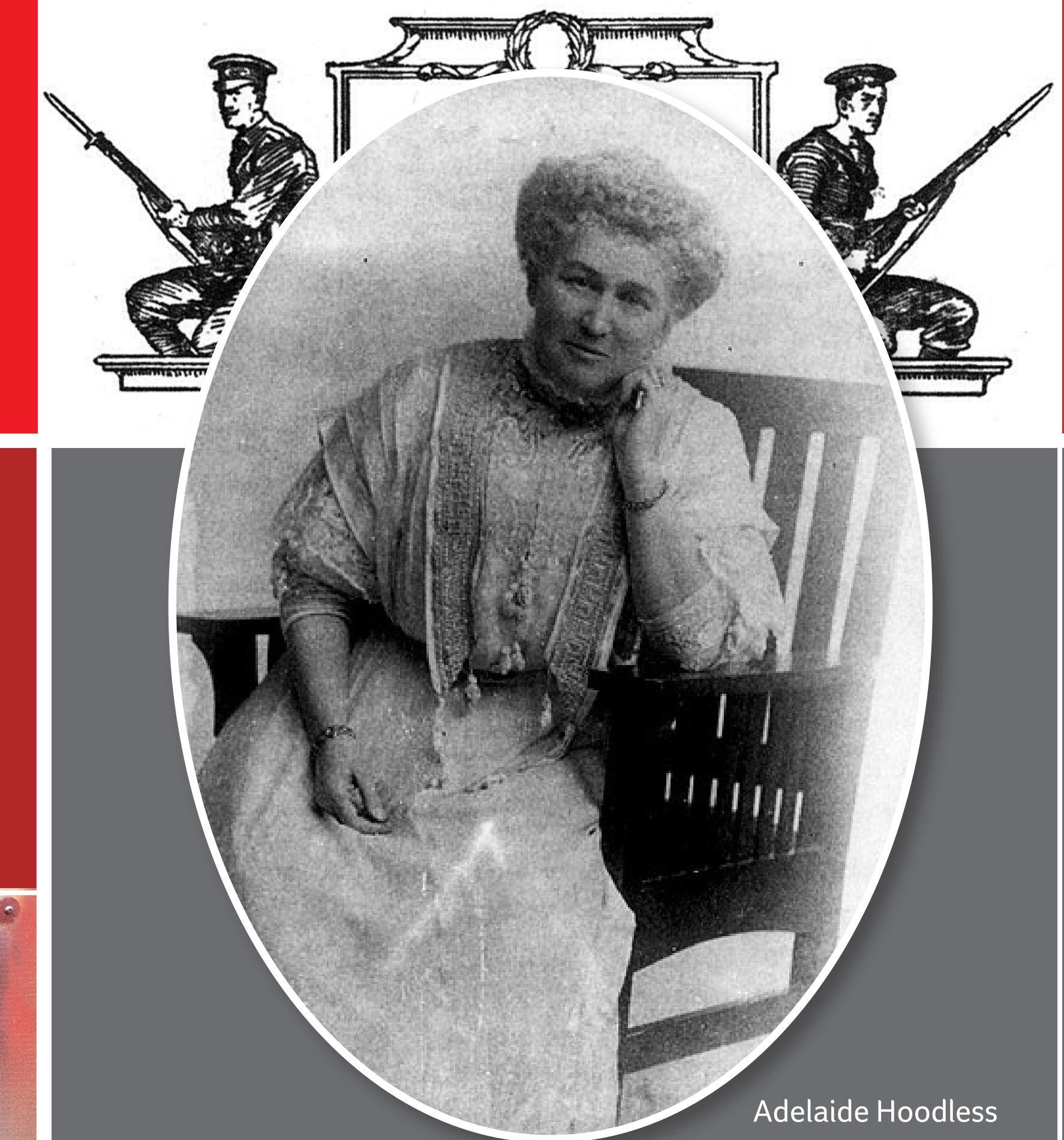


The first breakthrough came in 1873 when female property owners in British Columbia gained the right to vote in municipal elections. After that, progress was gradual.

In Ontario, Dr. Emily Stowe and her daughter Dr. Augusta Stowe-Gullen spearheaded the Suffrage movement for 40 years. In 1876 Dr. Emily founded the [Toronto Women's Literacy Club](#) which 7 years later became the [Toronto Women's Suffrage Association](#) and later still, the [Dominion Women's Enfranchisement Association](#).

The Suffragette Movement was dominated by well-educated women who wanted the political power to bring about change in areas of health care, employment equality, social assistance. It also complemented Prohibition as alcohol was thought to cause the decay of the family, resulting in unemployment and violence towards women and children.

Art - Gerry Hummer | Photograph - Robin Rowland



Adelaide Hoodless

The suffragists did not fully understand rural issues, so the farming ladies formed The Women's Institutes led by Adelaide Hoodless, an Ontario activist and reformer who opposed suffrage. She felt a woman's focus should be in the home:

*A woman who has not trained her sons to vote so that they will guard their mother's best interests and the best interests of the nation is not herself worthy to vote.* Historica Canada

Even in those early days, not everyone in power was against the Suffragette movement. In 1885 Sir John A Macdonald, the Prime Minister, made the surprising proposal of actually giving the right to vote to propertied women. *"I had hoped that Canada would have the honour of first placing women in the position she is certain, eventually, after centuries of oppression, to obtain... of completely establishing her equality as a human being and as a member of society with man."* He concluded, *"It is merely a matter of time."* But that time was still far off!