Margaret Brent, a successful St. Mary’s County lawyer and landowner, stepped before Maryland’s legislature in 1648 and asked for the right to vote. Shocked male lawmakers denied her request on the spot.

Over the next 200 years, Maryland’s women lobbied, marched and picketed in a determined battle for suffrage. They crisscrossed the state on foot and in trains, horse-drawn wagons, cars and boats to make the case that voting rights for women would bring social change and improve life for all. Many endured hecklers, assaults, community shunning and even jail sentences in unimaginable conditions.

Congress finally passed the 19th Amendment on June 4, 1919. It was ratified on August 18, 1920, though Maryland failed to do so until March 29, 1941. Women won the ballot – and then set to work anew, to educate the state’s new voters and to pursue other equal rights issues.

We have forgotten, or never learned, many of their names. With the help of historians and volunteers across the state, the Maryland Women’s Heritage Center is telling the stories of Maryland’s little-known suffragists.