The rise to prominence of the women's suffrage movement in the World War I years brought women reporters into U.S. newsrooms for the first time. In 1911 Emma Bugbee became the first woman hired as a "hard" news reporter for the "New York Tribune" (later the "Herald Tribune"). Ishbel Ross, author of "Ladies of the Press," got her start in journalism in 1916, when her interview of Emmaline Pankhurst, British suffragist leader, made the front page of the "Toronto Daily News." By 1919, the year Ross joined Bugbee at the "New York Tribune," Bugbee had worked her way to a desk down the hall from the newspaper's city room, where she covered suffrage news. While the suffragists marched for their rights, the women reporters covering suffrage news fought to get their stories on the front pages. According to Ross, when women's suffrage stories became page one news, women reporters were often replaced by their male colleagues. In 1914, Bugbee and others at the "New York Tribune" finally insisted they could handle the stories themselves and were given the chance. Bugbee walked with the suffragists on a week-long winter march from New York City to Albany, phoning her story in to the paper each night. Bugbee wrote for the "Tribune" for five decades; Ross eventually retired from journalism to write novels and biographies about American women. (Sixty-nine notes are included.) (MHC)
Two Case Histories, Ishbel Ross and Emma Bugbee: Women Journalists Ride the Rail With the Suffragettes

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Two Case Histories, Ishbel Ross and Emma Bugbee:
Women Journalists Ride the Rail With the Suffragettes

Newspaperwoman Ishbel Ross once said a spirit of enterprise propelled most women "into the exciting newspaper game." She suggested that newspaperwomen arrived at their various goals by odd routes:

They have taught and nursed and been stenographers. They have scrubbed floors and sold in shops and danced in the chorus. The present tendency is for them to break in fresh from college. Some have wandered into the profession by accident; others have battered their way in; a few have simply walked in the front door without knocking.

In 1915, Ross walked through the front door of the Toronto Daily News. She was ushered in by the managing editor. Then she was ushered out by the managing editor to get more training. Ross said, "I couldn't type and I didn't know the city, and the managing editor rightly said to me, 'What good can you be to us? Go to business school, learn to type.'"

She learned to type. She also became very familiar with Toronto.
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A few months later, Ross walked in the door of the Daily News again. She was hired at $7 a week. Barbara Bannon, in Publisher's Weekly, said the managing editor "must have been a kindly soul, . . . or else very shrewd at playing his hunches, because he gave the young woman a job in the library filing cuts." The agreement was that Ross might try a story "if the opportunity arose." She would be allowed to do an interview only if one came up and if no other staff member were available.

Waiting on Tenterhooks

Ross worked doggedly while waiting on tenterhooks for "the big break." Then, just the way it happens in the movies and occasionally in real life—in five to six weeks—it happened for her.

In the cases of many women journalists of the early 1900s, it could be truly said that the opportunities arose for women journalists through the odd route of suffragism. This was certainly true for both Ishbel Ross and Emma Bugbee, who would later be Ross' only female colleague in the city room of the New York Tribune.

Ross got her chance when Emmeline Pankhurst, the British suffragist leader, who had put aside her struggle for the women's vote to back the war effort, came to Toronto in 1916. Pankhurst had been recruited to tour Canada and to
recruit more volunteers for World War I. Canadian soldiers were dying off faster than they could be recruited.  

The same managing editor who had hired Ross surmised the other newspapers would send reporters to meet Pankhurst's train as it arrived in Toronto. He wanted a reporter from the *Daily News* to board the train before it reached the city; then the paper would get the story first.  

The editor looked around, seeing none of the regulars about, when his gaze fell on Ross. Then he shuffled her off to Buffalo to catch a train. Ross recalled, "He called me out of the library and off I went at three a.m. on a snowy morning." Ross connected with Pankhurst's train at 7 a.m.  

The exclusive interview almost did not come off. As the train picked up speed, Ross knocked on the famous woman's drawing room door. Joan Wickham, her secretary, answered, saying an interview was impossible because Mrs. Pankhurst "had laryngitis and was saving her voice for her speech." Wickham said Pankhurst was "straining her voice to speak at anything." She turned Ross down flat.  

Ross said, "I went back to my seat, thinking this was the end of my career. I thought it over and hit upon an ingenious scheme."

She said it was something no respectable reporter would do: "I wrote a little note telling Mrs. Pankhurst that an interview with her meant my breaking into journalism."
Ross then asked how Pankhurst, the champion of womankind, could let her down on her first assignment.20

It was a plea that Pankhurst found difficult to disregard because a long decade earlier, a woman named Susan B. Anthony had taken time to encourage the fledgling hopes of Pankhurst and other women in England. As an American suffragist, Anthony had lectured to ladies and working-class women in Pankhurst's home city of Manchester. Shortly thereafter, Pankhurst had founded the suffragette movement in Britain, the Women's Social and Political Union.21

Ross said the interview with the suffragette went well: "Mrs. Pankhurst, who really did have laryngitis, but who also had a very good sense of publicity, granted a wonderful interview."22

Sharing Common Backgrounds

Although Pankhurst did not have the time, nor probably the inclination to talk much about her early life, she and Ross had hauntingly similar backgrounds. Both as children were serious-minded and fond of listening to grown-up conversations.23 Both played the piano with aplomb as schoolgirls. Pankhurst, like Ross, had a penchant for language: her brothers called their young sister "the dictionary" because of her faultless spelling.24
Both read voraciously. As a child, the suffragette read everything she could lay her hands on, from John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* and *Holy War* to Thomas Carlyle's *French Revolution*. Pankhurst once said (in a curious echo to Ross' comments): "I do not remember a time when I could not read, nor any time when reading was not a joy and a solace."

Ross had developed an interest in journalism because of her father's frequent articles in newspapers. In a similar vein, Pankhurst, at a very young age, read the newspaper to her father while he ate breakfast, and developed a genuine interest in politics.

It is not known how Ross personally felt about Pankhurst. The journalist has said of the militants, "I never was a great suffrage sympathizer." She apparently was turned off by the tactics of the more militant suffragettes. However, she would write a whole history about women's rights while women marched in the late 1960s. In her *Sons of Adam, Daughters of Eve*, Ross catalogued the 72 years of struggle for women's suffrage in America. In that work Ross lauded the efforts of the League of Women Voters: "I wanted to do well by them, since they have been so influential in making women vote-conscious."

Ross interviewed Pankhurst on the train from Buffalo to Toronto on March 10, 1916. Pankhurst had left Brampton, New York, bound by rail for the Canadian city.
What manner of woman greeted Ross? A tired and aging woman—or the warrior conjured up by conventional memory? According to Dudley Barker: "The image that remains of her is a blend of martyr and virago; the violent, strident prototype of the new woman emerging inexorably from Victorian serfdom, the Boadicea of the battle of the sexes." 31

The "warrior" who greeted Ross, however, was small of stature:

[S]he was a handsome rather than a pretty woman; olive skin, black hair and heavy black eyebrows, fine and wide-set violet eyes, high cheekbones, a large but well-shaped mouth, a delicate figure. Her appearance of feminine dignity was enhanced by the invariable gentility of her clothes; she dressed for a street battle as though for an afternoon tea. 32

On this tour, Pankhurst was also a worn-out and aging woman. Her laryngitis was only one small indication that her health had given way. Even so, she continued to have a controlled manner toward journalists, even if she did try to set limits on her interviews. 33 Later, Ross said about her interview with the suffrage leader, which was about an hour in length: "I took fast notes. As I got off the train in Toronto I saw all my rivals from the other papers rushing to meet her." 34

Writing About a Suffragette
Ross returned to the *Daily News* and processed the copy very quickly, typing enough to fill a newspaper column. After the city editor read what Ross had written, he said, "My word, this is good." The pure "beginner's luck"—as Ross called it—landed her one of the slots on the front-page. She didn't know how good her "luck" was until she saw her story the following day, on March 11, under a banner headline with other war stories.

Ross was 20 years old at the time of the interview. She would write about newsmakers, especially women, for fifty-five years to come.

Ross said, "I guess I owe my career to Mrs. Pankhurst." As for the aging suffragette, Emmeline sailed from New York harbor, on July 22, 1916. Contrary to her usual custom, Pankhurst evaded reporters and shunned all publicity: she remained in seclusion for half an hour on the pier, and at the last minute, boarded the *Cunarder Saxonia*, bound for Liverpool. In the light of Pankhurst playing hide n' seek with the press, Ross' train interview had been an even greater coup—or stroke of luck.

Ross would often refer to this first story when she talked to interviewers. The day after the Pankhurst coup the young journalist was given a staff assignment, and from then on her articles often appeared on the front page.

*Struggling to Change Minds*
Several years later Ishbel Ross indirectly benefited from the coverage of the suffragists. That is, by the time she had come to the New York Tribune in 1919, certain women had "an even chance" and "even positions of trust" in the organization because of their coverage of the suffrage movement. 

By the time Ross had arrived, Emma Bugbee, had almost made it into the Tribune's city room. This was an accomplishment in a time when one could place all the women regularly employed at the turn of the century as reporters throughout the country in one large newsroom. There were about 300 of them.

The suffrage movement would change this. Not only would it bring women into the newsroom, but it would provide a sense of front-line involvement for those women who felt left out in the years of World War I. Mary Margaret McBride described the inclination of many young women of the time when she said: "I remember one day in chemistry lab a classmate named Julia and me being sunk in gloom because the First World War was ending without us." The young women were convinced that they would never amount to anything because they had not been "female Richard Harding Davises, right up in the front lines." 

Ross wrote to Marion Marzolf about Bugbee's beginnings on the paper:
World War I, like all wars, brought women writers into prominence, and such reporters as Emma Bugbee, for the New York Tribune, marched with the suffrage workers and covered these early liberationists at a time when newspapermen laughed at them and scoffed at their gatherings. It was a re-run of the days of Susan Anthony and Lucy Stone, and a preview of . . . [Betty] Friedan, Gloria Steinem.  

Bugbee's acceptance into the Tribune's city room did not happen overnight. She had graduated from Barnard College six years after Helen Rogers, who later become Mrs. Ogden Reid and advertising manager of the Reid newspaper dynasty. Bugbee looked like the proper Barnard graduate. She was described by Ross as "a shy girl with candid blue eyes and a New England conscience."

She was one of those new career women who decided teaching was not for her. After a year at Methuen High School, she walked into the New York Tribune office and got a job—thus setting a record as the first woman hired as a hard-news reporter for the Tribune.

It is not known if Helen Rogers Reid's Barnard connection were a factor in the hiring of Bugbee, because she was graduated from the same alma mater. Nor is it known if Bugbee were the person entrusted to write about an interest close to the heart of the publisher's wife. However, what a curious event that placed Emma Bugbee, Barnard graduate and feminist, with the Tribune at a time
when the suffrage movement began to get increasing coverage in many newsrooms. The year was 1911--eight years before Ross became the second woman to cover hard news for the newspaper.

It must have been difficult to work out all the logistics to make way for the first woman reporter. Bugbee was not seated in the city room, but had to work down the hall. Eleanor Booth Simmons, who had done the Sunday specials for The Tribune and who assisted Bugbee in the coverage on suffrage, had to walk downstairs to work with her. Simmons had been sequestered on an upper floor, where the women's department for the newspaper was located.

Ross said that at the beginning of the suffrage campaign, Madelaine Pierce, the editor for the women's page, sent all the copy downstairs to the city room by copyboy. Pierce did this so that "no one would suffer from the obnoxious sight of a female in the city room." George Murdick, then city editor, was "dubious of the strange beings who inhabited the upper regions."

The feminists captured plenty of front-page column inches, as they battled for the women's vote by marching on the streets across America. Likewise, the women reporters who wrote about the suffragists were fighting their own battles--to get their stories on the front page. Ross later would later write about the ordeals that the newspaperwomen
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experienced to reap recognition for their work in her **Ladies of the Press**.

Behind the efforts of the women staffers was the silent moving force of Helen Rogers Reid, even though her direct influence cannot be measured. In *The Paper*, Richard Kluger said: "Not by coincidence or mere timely mellowing did the Tribune editorial page patronizingly note the suffragist activities when they picked up steam in 1912 and then wholeheartedly endorse the female franchise when the campaign reached its critical stage in 1918."51

When the suffrage movement was in its busiest years, Bugbee and Simmons of the Tribune worked nearly full time on the interviews because there were neither press agents nor handouts.52 Bugbee and Simmons had to go personally to see Dr. Anna Howard Shaw, Carrie Chapman Catt or Alva Smith Belmont. Ross said that the two reporters had to dig out letters from their mail that might make news: "Things were particularly lively during the days of the Bull Moose campaign. New women's political organizations were forming overnight."53

"The reporters were run off their feet" because there were so many day-to-day events to cover. However, when the women's movement made page one, the stories were assigned to newspapermen.54 Ross, who catalogued advances of the Tribune's women staffers in *Ladies of the Press*, said
the women were allowed to work up a story  
but when it became front-page stuff they  
were snatchèd off it and a man was put on the job.  
One striking example was Mrs. Emmeline Pankhurst's  
detention at Ellis Island, when she came to  
America in the heat of the suffrage campaign. A  
man was assigned to the story.55 It was apt to be  
the same for suffrage parades.  

According to Ross, the last big suffrage parade in New  
York pushed the women staffers into a "now or never" stance.  
On the eve of the parade, they took decisive action.  
Evangeline Cole was deputized to ask Ogden Reid "if the  
women could handle the entire story themselves." Reid  
hesitated at first. But finally, he replied that "if Milton  
Snyder, the night managing editor, consented, it would be  
all right with him."56 She said:  

The battle was won, because Mr. Snyder liked the  
work of the women reporters. Mr. Burdick  
surrendered and helped to map out the day's  
schedule. Miss Simmons wrote the lead, a double  
column story on the front page. Miss Bugbee did  
the straight news story. Ethel Peyser, who  
specialized in domestic science news for the  
Tribune, helped her. Miss Cole and Christine  
Valleau, the department secretary, took the side  
stories. They filled nine columns between them.  
Not a word of their copy was changed. This was a  
great triumph for the suffrage reporters.57  

Marching on the Suffrage Front  

While the men marched off to war, the women considered  
themselves war correspondents on the suffrage front. Bugbee  
joined other prominent women reporters of the time on a 150-
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mile march to Albany in the winter of 1914. These famous names included Dorothy Dix, Ada Patterson, Viola Rodgers, Zoe Beckley, Sophie Treadwell, Martha Coman, Ethel Lloyd Patterson, Virginia Hudson and others. The newspaperwomen "marched side by side with the militants and shared the brickbats and cheers."58

Suffragist General Rosalie Jones led the march. She carried a petition, which urged suffrage measures be placed before the New York State Legislature. Jones planned to present the petition to Governor Martin H. Glynn.59

When the planned parade had began to look like a story, the managing editor of the Tribune said to Bugbee: "I think we ought to be covered on this. Could you get one of the women [suffragists] to keep in touch with us every night and tell us what happens?"60

Ross explained how Bugbee, the proper Barnard graduate, softly hinted that she could cover the story herself:

"I suppose I should go along with them," said Miss Bugbee.
But editors in those days felt that women reporters should not get their feet wet, if it could be avoided. . . .
"Oh, we wouldn't want you to do a thing like that," he said, a little shocked. "It would be so cold."
"But I want to," Miss Bugbee insisted hardly.
"Well, it would be fine if you feel that way about it."61

She felt that way about it. The "war correspondent" got wet and cold, as predicted, but had other adventures as
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well. Ross chronicled the suffragists' Albany march. She said they were en route on Christmas Day:

The local women arranged meetings along the way. There were many human interest stories about this motley army, tramping through the snow in the burdensome costumes of the period. They arrived in Albany led by a police escort and fife and drum corps. [Suffragist] General [Rosalie] Jones carried a lighted lantern. The camp followers and "war correspondents" had to struggle with the spectators on the sidewalk to keep them from breaking through the line to shake hands with the little general.  

Bugbee tramped through snow for a week on the pilgrimage from New York, up the west bank of the Hudson to Albany. Kluger said every night "Bugbee managed to find a phone, still an uncommon instrument in rural areas, and call in the day's developments."  

In later coverage of the movement, she rode in a police patrol to Yonkers where the suffragists congregated to heckle President Woodrow Wilson. Ross said:

Miss Bugbee found herself in the thick of a suffrage brawl when Alice Paul, of the Woman's Party, tried to crash the Metropolitan Cjera House with her followers and banners, while Woodrow Wilson was speaking there. They wanted to badger him on the suffrage question. But the police got rough with them instead. One minute they were walking on the sidewalk, the next the police had pounced on them and the street was filled with tumult.
Also, about that time, Bugbee "invaded her first saloon and startled the bartender by demanding coffee."65 According to Ross' account of her colleague's early newspaper history:

Miss Bugbee's stories made the front page. They were done in a jocular vein. No one took suffrage seriously at this stage, except the suffragists themselves. However, the trip to Albany incited them to further efforts. They decided to storm Washington. This time they wore pilgrim capes and brown hoods for identification. The same group of newspaper girls [newspaperwomen] accompanied them. Miss Bugbee took them as far as Philadelphia. The Tribune was thoroughly covered all along the route of the march.66

The march on Washington as a great success. But when the suffragists arrived at the Capitol, "mobs of hoodlums defied the police and broke up the orderly line of 9,000 marchers, knocking down women, spitting in their faces, yelling epithets at them."67

All these stories helped the status of women reporters like Bugbee, "once they had become big news": in 1915 the Tribune girls were brought downstairs to the city room. From this point on, the Tribune avoided canning women's news on a page only for women. Women's news had now officially become a part of the general schedule. Ross said Bessie Breuer was the last person "to shepherd the flock as a separate body."68

Bugbee continued to cover the women's movement for the Tribune, which emerged later as the Herald Tribune. She stayed with the newspaper for five decades. Ross became a
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general assignment reporter, covering the stories of the "Lost Generation" before she retired to write novels and biographies about notable American women.

* * * *

Reprinted below is the Pankhurst interview, the first newspaper article written by Ishbel Ross. It appeared under the headline, "Women Will Win the War," in the Toronto Daily News, on March 11, 1916, page 1, column 2. The subhead was "Mrs. Pankhurst Endorses the Remark of a British Statesman." The second subhead was "Suffragette Queen Visiting Toronto." In this, her first attempt at reporting the news, Ross has a tendency to back into a sentence with "It was" or "It is."

"It is playing the Kaiser's game," said Mrs. Pankhurst to The Daily News, speaking of the bilingual question at the Queen's Hotel today. She would not go so far as to say that any emissary of the enemy was actually stirring up strife in Canada to stop recruiting; but she would say that that was just the sort of thing that such an enemy would do.

It was the policy of the Germans to keep the Allies busy in various parts of the Empire, to distract their attention. After touring through the United States and after visiting border towns in Canada, Mrs. Pankhurst gave it as her opinion that Canada would do well to look to her home defences [sic]. It was better to be over-prepared than sorry. The Germans were not going to be easily beaten. It was the duty of every man to join some organization, if not for overseas service, at least for home defence. She saw many men on the streets in Canada who might be spared
for the defence of the Empire and whose places
might be taken by women.

Value of a Truce.

As for the bi-lingual question, it was
undoubtedly hurting the cause of the allies. What
was needed was a pause for concentration on the
winning of the war. Smiling a little, Mrs.
Pankhurst said that they (the women's Social and
Political Union) had found the value of a truce in
England. They had advanced further towards votes
for women since the war than they had before it.
Perhaps they had not understood the men better
than the men had understood them. But they had
shown that they were of use. She was not worrying
about the vote until after the war.

"I am shocked when I meet an English-Canadian
who cannot speak French," she said. She was more
grateful to her father for seeing that she
appreciated French than for almost anything else.
It meant so much. The vision of the French was so
clear. The Canadians might be the greatest race
within the Empire. They should concentrate on
winning the war. After that they would understand
one another better.

All Must Help.

"If we are to win the war quickly, the help of
all, men and women alike, will have to be
enlisted--and not only to win the war; but after
the war is over to keep the business of the nation
going. We shall all be poorer. We shall all have
to work harder. We cannot afford to have any
idlers.

"Our organization has been working to get the
authorities to realize the huge reserve forces
that lie in the women of the country. I have found
Canadian women wonderfully willing. Perhaps they
do not realize the danger as keenly as they do in
England. It is hard to do so when one is so far
from the seat of war."

Cultured, delicate women in England did not
mind what they did. If they had not been trained
to do anything else, they were willing to scrub
floors. "That is the spirit that will win the
war."

"Women Will Win the War."
Mrs. Pankhurst does not agree with Baron Shaughnessy in his view that further recruiting at present is unnecessary, and dangerous to the industry of the country. In the first place it would be disastrous if, for the defence of Canada, troops should have to be drawn from the fighting line. Secondly it should not be said that the men were essential until the reserve industrial force of the women of the country had been exhausted.

Germany had taken the lead of Great Britain in that while Britain had been slow to utilize its women, Germany had 500,000 women working on munitions at the very outset of the war. Statistics showed that now there were three women to every man. Soon there would be six or seven to every man. It was literally true as Lloyd George had said that women would win the war.

Mrs. Pankhurst's present mission will be concluded in Winnipeg on March 18th. Then she will go to Chicago, where she will be busy in the United States until the end of April. After that the idea of remaining in Canada to aid in war work was "very tempting."

She had been invited to go to California and the Western States, where she had never been before. She could not say what she would do after April. Perhaps conditions in England would demand her return. They were very busy there trying to take their full share of citizenship during the war.

Mrs. Pankhurst, who arrived in Toronto from Brampton at nine o'clock to-day, spoke at the Cafe Royal at one o'clock along the lines which she had followed in talking to The Daily News. She leaves tonight for Montreal, where she intends to express herself fully with regard to the bi-lingual question. She will return to Toronto on Monday to speak for Serbian relief in conjunction with Mr. Cheddo Miyatovich.
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7. Obituary, David Ross, Telegraph-Journal, St. John, New Brunswick (from Beatrice Reeves, family file), 20 September 1934.

8. Bannon, *Publishers Weekly*, p. 6. Ishbel Ross' account of her experiences on the *Toronto Daily News*, as told to Bannon, Marzolf and other interviewers, vary in some particulars and as to depth of detail, but are similar.


16. Interview with Ishbel Ross. Undated newspaper article, no source listed (from Beatrice Reeves, family
files), 10 June 1988. Ross said in the interview that she "laughs about it now."


18. Undated newspaper article, no source listed (from Beatrice Reeves, family files), 10 June 1988.


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36. Interview with Ishbel Ross, undated newspaper article, no source listed (from Beatrice Reeves, family files), 10 June 1988.


38. Marzolf, Up From the Footnote, p. 41.


40. Marzolf, Up From the Footnote, p. 40.

41. Ishbel Ross, Letter to Marion Marzolf (from 155 East Seventy-sixth Street, Manhattan), 17 May 1975.

42. Modern Times, p. 274.


47. Ross, Ladies of the Press, p. 122.


52. Marzolf, Up From the Footnote, p. 44.


54. Ross, Ladies of the Press, p. 123; and Marzolf, Up From the Footnote, p. 44.


67. Ross, *Ladies of the Press*, p. 122. There are some time conflicts in Ross' account of the suffrage parade to Washington. Ross sets the arrival in Washington on March 3, 1913. The parade seems logically to have happened after the march to Albany in December 1914. There might have been two marches on Washington, although this is doubtful—one on March 3, 1913, and one in 1915.


69. David Bain of the Toronto Public Library went through the daily newspapers of the *Toronto Daily News*, from January 1 to March 31, 1916, to discover the article of March 11 and three ensuing articles printed with a week about Emmeline Pankhurst. Ishbel Ross appears to have written one called "Toronto's Heart Touched by Sufferings of Serbians," which appeared on March 14, 1916, on page 8, and covered Pankhurst's return engagement in Toronto after she had spoken in Montreal. The language patterns of the writer are very similar to that of the patterns in Ishbel's first article on March 11.