

Romance Milestones & Trailblazers

1740

- Published: **Pamela, or Virtue Rewarded** by Samuel Richardson. Considered first romance novel.

1902

- Georgette Heyer begins writing career. Continues until 1974.

1920s

- Barbara Cartland begins writing career. Continues until 2000.

1939

- Simon & Schuster introduces Pocket Books. Most paperbacks were reprints.

1940s

- Eleanor Hibbert begins writing career (Victoria Holt, Jean Plaidy, Philippa Carr). Continues into the 1990s.

1949

- Harlequin in founded in Winnipeg, Manitoba.

1967

- Dell introduces *Candlelight Romance* imprint. Debut novel: **Ellen Matthews, Mission Nurse** by Ralph Hayes. Imprint evolves into *Candlelight Ecstasy* in 1980.

1972

- Published: **The Flame and the Flower** by Kathleen E. Woodiwiss. First modern romance.

1973

- May - Harlequin introduces the *Harlequin Presents* imprint. Debut novel: **Gates of Steel** by Anne Hampson. Imprint continues to present day.

1974

- Published: **Forth into Light** by Gordon Merrick. Early gay romance series.
- Published: **The Front Runner** by Patricia Nell Warren. First gay romance to receive breakout mainstream success.
- Published: **Loving Her** by Ann Allen Shockley. First biracial lesbian romance.

1975

- Published: **Forever...** by Judy Blume. Seminal young adult romance.
- Torstar purchases Harlequin.

1976

- Playboy Press enters the romance publishing. Significant impact on cover art. Debut novel: **Proud Passion** by Barbara Bonham.

1977

- August - Harlequin introduces the *Mystique Books* imprint. Debut novel: **House of Secrets** by Denise Noel. Imprint ends in 1982.
- September - Mills & Boon (Harlequin) introduces the *Harlequin Masquerade* imprint. Debut novel: **Eleanor and the Marquis** by Jane Wilby. Imprint ends in 1993.

1979

- Published: **Love Comes Softly** by Janette Oke. First modern inspirational romance.
- Fall - Vivian Stephens becomes an associate editor with Dell Candlelight.

1980

- May - Silhouette introduces *Silhouette Romance* imprint. Debut novel: **Payment in Full** by Anne Hampson. Imprint ends in 1983.
- June - Harlequin introduces *Harlequin Superromance* imprint. Debut novel: **End of Innocence** by Abra Taylor. Imprint continues to present day.

- June - Published: **Entwined Destinies** by Rosalind Welles. First own voices category romance; edited by Vivian Stephens.
- June - Published: **Gaywyck** by Vincent Virga. Early gay historical romance.
- December - Dell introduces *Candlelight Ecstasy* imprint of sensual contemporary romances. Debut novel: **The Tawny Gold Man** by Amii Lorin. Imprint ends in 1983.

1981

- February - Bantam introduces *Circle of Love* sweet contemporary imprint. Debut novel: **Gold in Her Hair** by Anne Neville. Imprint ends in 1983.
- June - First Golden Heart awards presented.
- June - Berkley/Jove introduces *Second Chance at Love* imprint featuring older heroines getting a second chance with love. Debut novel: **Flamenco Nights** by Susanna Collins. Imprint ends in 1984.
- October - Published: **Golden Fire, Silver Ice** by Marisa de Zavala. First own voices Latinx romance; edited by Vivian Stephens.
- October - Silhouette introduces *Silhouette First Love* imprint aimed at young adults. Debut novel: **New Boy in Town** by Dorothy Francis. Imprint ends in 1987.

1982

- Published: **Say Jesus and Come to Me** by Ann Allen Shockley. First black lesbian romance.
- January - Published: **The Tender Mending** by Lia Sanders. Own voices romance by Angela Jackson & Sandra Jackson-Opoku; edited by Vivian Stephens.
- February - Silhouette introduces *Silhouette Special Editions* imprint. Debut novel: **Terms of Surrender** by Janet Dailey. Imprint converted to *Harlequin Special Edition* in 2011.
- June - First Golden Medallion (RITA) awards presented.
- June - Silhouette introduces *Silhouette Desire* imprint. Debut novel: **Corporate Affair** by Stephanie James. Imprint converted to *Harlequin Desire* in 2011.
- July - Published: **Annie on My Mind** by Nancy Garden. Early young adult lesbian romance.
- September - Published: **Lesson in Love** by Tracy West. First own voices Silhouette young adult romance.

1983

- April - Harlequin introduces *Harlequin American Romance* imprint. Debut novel: **Tomorrow's Promise** by Sandra Brown. Line continues to present day.
- May - Bantam introduces *Loveswept* imprint that focused on the author. Debut novel: **Heaven's Price** by Sandra Brown. Imprint ends in 1987.
- May - Published: **Untamed Heart** by Elda Minger. First contemporary romance with a condom on page.
- June - Silhouette introduces *Silhouette Intimate Moments* imprint. Debut novel: **Dreams of Evening** by Kristin James. Imprint evolved into *Silhouette Romantic Suspense* in 2007, then into *Harlequin Romantic Suspense* in 2011.
- August - Dell introduces *Candlelight Ecstasy Supreme* imprint. Debut novel: **Tempestuous Eden** by Heather Graham. Imprint ends in 1987.

1984

- February - Silhouette introduces *Silhouette Inspirations* imprint. Debut novel: **Heartsong** by Debbie Macomber. Imprint ends in December, 1984.
- March - Harlequin introduces *Harlequin Temptation* imprint. Debut novel: **Spring Fancy** by LaVyrle Spencer. Imprint ends in 2005.
- August - Harlequin introduces *Harlequin Intrigue* imprint. Debut novel: **The Key** by Rebecca Flanders. Imprint continues to present day.
- November - Published: **Rites of Spring** by Sandra Kitt. First book by a black author to be published by Harlequin; edited by Vivian Stephens.

1985

- November - Published: **Adam and Eva** by Sandra Kitt. First own voices Harlequin romance; edited by Vivian Stephens.1986
- April - Published: **Rose Royale** by Inga Dunbar. Harlequin Historical #1
- January - Published: **Sweet Starfire** by Jayne Ann Krentz. Early space romance

1987

- June - Published: **The Ivory Key** by Rita Clay Estrada. First paranormal romance.
- June - Silhouette introduces *Silhouette Crosswinds* imprint. Imprint ends in 1987.
- July - First Golden Medallion (RITA) award in Young Adult Romance category presented. Winning novel: **Video Fever** by Kathleen Garvey.

1988

- July - Harlequin introduces Harlequin Historical imprint (line #2). Debut novel: **Satan's Angel** by Kristin James. Imprint continues to present day.
- November - Published: **Careless Whispers** by Rochelle Alers. Referenced in LaQuette's speech.

1989

- March - Harlequin introduces *Harlequin Regency* line. Debut novel : **Matched Pair** by Eva Rutland. Line ends in 1993.
- July - First Golden Medallion (RITA) award in Romantic Suspense category presented. Winning novel: **Brazen Virtue** by Nora Roberts.

1990

- June - Published: **Rooms of the Heart** by Donna Hill. Referenced in LaQuette's speech.
- July - First RITA award in First Book category presented. Winning novel: **Out of the Blue** by Alaina Hawthorne.

1991

- December - Published: **Redeeming Love** by Francine Rivers. Seminal inspirational text.

1992

- July - First RITA award in Paranormal Romance category presented. Winning novel: **Angel for Hire** by Justine Davis.
- August - Published: **Unforgivable** by Joyce McGilll. First own voices Silhouette Intimate Moments.
- December - Published: **Season of Light** by Lorna Michaels. First own voices Jewish contemporary romance.

1993

- January - Published: **Dreaming of You** by Lisa Kleypas. Popularization of the non-aristocratic hero in historical romance
- March - Silhouette introduces *Silhouette Shadows* imprint. Debut novel: **The Last Cavalier** by Heather Graham Pozzessere. Imprint ends in 1996.
- March - Published: **Stone Butch Blues** by Leslie Feinberg. First genderqueer mainstream fiction with romantic elements

1994

- March - Published: **Invisible Life** by E. Lynn Harris. Seminal own voices black gay romance
- July - Published: **Night Song** by Beverly Jenkins. First black own voices historical romance.
- July - Kensington introduces *Arabesque* imprint. Debut novel: **Serenade** by Sandra Kitt. Imprint is sold to BET Books, then to Harlequin.
- July - Published: **Forever Yours** by Francis Ray. Arabesque #2
- October - Harlequin introduces *MIRA* imprint. Debut novel: **Slow Burn** by Heather Graham Pozzessere. Imprint continues to present day.

1995

- March - Published: **The Color of Love** by Sandra Kitt. Referenced in LaQuette's speech.

- June - Published: **The Fictitious Marquis** by Alina Adams. First own voices Jewish historical romance.
 - July - First RITA award in reintroduced Inspirational Romance category (category briefly appeared in 1985 and 1986). Winning novel: **An Echo in the Darkness** by Francine Rivers.
 - August - Silhouette introduces *Silhouette Yours Truly* imprint. Debut novel: **Wanted: Perfect Partner** by Debbie Macomber. Imprint ends in 1999.
- 1996
- August - Harlequin introduces *Harlequin Love and Laughter* imprint. Debut novel: **I Do, I Do...For Now** by JoAnn Ross. Imprint ends in 1999.
- 1997
- August - Harlequin introduces *Love Inspired* imprint. Debut novel: **The Risk of Loving** by Jane Peart. Imprint continues to present day.
- 1998
- January - Published: **Addicted** by Zane. First black erotic romance to receive mainstream success.
- 1999
- January - Published: **Beyond Desire** by Gwynne Forster. Referenced in LaQuette's speech.
 - May - Harlequin introduces *Harlequin Duets* imprint. Debut novel: **With a Stetson and Smile/The Bridesmaid's Bet** by Vickie Lewis Thompson/Christie Ridgway. Imprint evolved into *Harlequin Flipsides* imprint in 2003 before ending in 2005.
 - September - Published: **Desert Kiss/Besos en el Desierto** by Gloria Alvarez. Encanto First Class; published by Kensington, these titles were published in both English and Spanish in the same book.
 - September - Published: **Forever True/Solo Tuya** by Elaine Alberro. Encanto First Class; published by Kensington, these titles were published in both English and Spanish in the same book.
 - September - Published: **Now and Always/Para Siempre** by Caridad Scordato. Encanto First Class; published by Kensington, these titles were published in both English and Spanish in the same book.
 - September - Published: **Summer Dreams/Suenos de Verano** by Hebbly Roman. Encanto First Class; published by Kensington, these titles were published in both English and Spanish in the same book.
- 2000
- July - First RITA award in Romance Novella category. Winning novella: "Starry, Starry Night" by Marianne Willman in **Once Upon a Star**.
 - July - Recognized: **Passing by Samaria** by Sharon Ewell Foster. First black own voices inspirational; double RITA finalist.
 - September - Published: **The Forsaken** by L. A. Banks. Early own voices black paranormal romance.
 - Kensington introduces the *Dafina* imprint. Imprint continues to present day.
- 2001
- January - Harlequin introduces *Harlequin Medical Romance* line. Debut novel: **Practically Perfect** by Carolyn Anderson. Line continues to present day. Predecessors: *Mills & Boon Doctor Nurse Romance* line, 1977-1989 and *Mills & Boons Medical Romance* line, 1989-2000.
 - January - Published: **Suddenly You** by Lisa Kleypas. Early historical fat representation.
 - March - Published: **Safe Harbor** by Radclyffe. Lesbian romance.
 - August - Published: **Exposed** by Julie Leto. Harlequin Blaze #2
 - September - Harlequin introduces *Harlequin Blaze* imprint. Debut novel: **Notorious** by Vicki Lewis Thompson. Imprint continues to present day.

- November - Harlequin introduces *Red Dress Ink* imprint. Debut novel: **Milkrun** by Sarah Mlynowski. Imprint ends in 2013.
- 2002
- October - Published: **Born Confused** by Tanuja Desai Hidier. First South Asian young adult romance.
 - October - Published: **The Surgeon** by Tess Gerritsen. Chinese American author and RITA winner.
- 2003
- May - Published: **Never Again Once More** by Mary B. Morrison. Referenced in LaQuette's speech.
- 2004
- January- Published: **Bet Me** by Jennifer Crusie. Early contemporary fat representation.
 - July - First RITA award in Novel with Strong Romantic Elements category. Winning novel: **Between Sisters** by Kristin Hannah.
 - July - Silhouette introduces *Silhouette Bombshell* imprint. Debut novel: **Daughter of Destiny** by Lindsay McKenna. Imprint ends in 2007.
 - September - Published: **A Night to Remember** by Eve Vaughn. Referenced in LaQuette's speech.
- 2005
- July - Harlequin introduces *Harlequin Everlasting Love* imprint. Debut novel: **Dancing on Sunday Afternoons** by Linda Cardillo. Imprint ends in 2008.
 - July - Harlequin introduces *Harlequin NEXT* imprint. Debut novel: **There's Always Plan B** by Susan Mallery. Imprint ends in 2012.
 - July - Harlequin introduces *Love Inspired Suspense* imprint. Debut novel: **Note of Peril** by Hannah Alexander. Imprint continues to present day.
 - November - Published: **Desperate Tigress** by Jade Lee. Early own voices historical romance.
- 2006
- May - Harlequin introduces *Harlequin Spice* imprint. Debut novel: **title needed**. Imprint ends in 2011.
 - July - Harlequin introduces *Kimani Romance* imprint (evolved from *Arabesque*). Debut novel: **Solid Soul** by Brenda Jackson. Imprint ends in 2020.
 - October - Harlequin introduces *Silhouette Nocturne* imprint. Debut novel: **Unforgiven** by Lindsay McKenna. Imprint becomes *Harlequin Nocturne* in 2010 before ending in 2019
- 2007
- February - Harlequin introduces *Kimani TRU* imprint targeted for African-American young adults. Debut novel: **Indigo Summer** by Monica McKayhan. Imprint ends in 2014.
 - February - Harlequin introduces *Harlequin NASCAR* imprint. Debut novel: **To the Limit** by Pamela Britton. Imprint ends in 2010.
- 2008
- January - Published: **Irresistible Forces** by Brenda Jackson. First black romance to hit the New York Times list.
 - February - Harlequin introduces *Love Inspired Historical* imprint. Debut novel: **The Briton** by Catherine Palmer. Imprint ends in 2020.
 - September - Published: **Charmed** by Koko Brown. Referenced in LaQuette's speech.
- 2009
- July - Harlequin introduces *Harlequin TEEN* imprint. Debut novel: **My Soul to Lose** by Rachel Vincent. Evolved into *Inkyard Press* imprint in 2018.

2010

- October - Published: **Butterfly Swords** by Jeannie Lin. Early own voices Asian historical romance.

2011

- Recognized: **Hot Head** by Damon Suede. First own voices M/M romance to be named to *Goodreads Best of the Year* list.
- February - Harlequin introduces *Carina Press* imprint. Imprint continues to present day.
- April - Harlequin introduces *Harlequin Heartwarming* imprint. Debut novel: **Belleporte Summer** by Laura Abbot. Imprint continues to present day.

2012

- February - Published: **Aristotle and Dante Discover the Secrets of the Universe** by Benjamin Alire Saenz. Seminal own voices Latinx queer romance.
- October - Harlequin introduces *Heartsong Presents* imprint. Imprint ends in 2015. Recognized: **On a Night Like This** by Barbara Freethy. Amazon's Bestselling Author of All Time.
- Published: **Your Happy End** by E.E. Ottoman. First own voices transgender romance.
- January - Harlequin introduces *Harlequin KISS* imprint. Debut novel: **Hitched!** by Jessica Hart. Imprint ends in 2014.

2015

- July - First RITA award in Erotic Romance category. Winning novel: **The Saint** by Tiffany Reisz.
- July - Recognized: **The Saint** by Tiffany Reisz. First own voices queer author to win a RITA Award.

2017

- July - Recognized: **The Moon in the Palace** by Weina Dai Randel. First own voices Chinese RITA Award winner.

2018

- February - Harlequin introduces *Harlequin DARE* imprint. Debut novel: **Born to be Wild** by JC Harroway. Imprint continues to present day.
- April - Published: **Total Bravery** by Piper J. Drake. First own voices Thai (Southeast Asian) romance.
- December - Harlequin introduces *Inkyard Press* imprint for young adults. Debut novel: **29 Dates** by Melissa de la Cruz. Imprint continues to present day.

2019

- July - Recognized: **Long Shot** by Kennedy Ryan. First black author to win a RITA Award. Shares milestone with M. Malone.
- July - Recognized: **Bad Blood** by M. Malone. First black author to win a RITA Award. Shares milestone with Kennedy Ryan.
- July - Recognized: **My So-Called Bollywood Life** by Nisha Sharma. First South Asian author to win a RITA Award.