

“Women's Suffrage: The Long Journey to the Vote”

Part 3, The Leading Ladies

In 1848, a group of mostly women gathered in Seneca Falls, New York to discuss the problem of women's rights. They were invited there by reformers Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Lucretia Mott.

Elizabeth Cady Stanton was born November 12, 1815, in Johnstown, New York. She was a leading figure in women's rights movement. She prepared and presented the “Declaration of Sentiments” at the Seneca Falls Convention and is credited with initiating the first efforts for women's suffrage. Her husband, Henry Brewster Stanton, was the co-founder of the Republican Party.

Lucretia Mott was born January 3, 1793 in Nantucket, Massachusetts. She was a Quaker and women's rights activist. Mott helped write the Declaration of Sentiments. She was a Quaker preacher and used her impressive speaking abilities advocating for abolition and the suffrage movement.

Of the attendees at the Seneca Falls Convention, most agreed: American women deserved their own political identities, believing women should have the right to vote.

During the process to pass the 14th and 15th Amendments to the Constitution (guaranteeing black males the right to vote), some women's suffrage advocates believed this was an opportunity to push for women's suffrage. Stanton and Susan B. Anthony were women who believed this was a chance to push for universal suffrage. As a result they refused to support the 15th Amendment. They became part of a faction called the National Woman Suffrage Association founded by Lucy Stone. They began to fight for a universal-suffrage amendment to the Constitution.

Other women thought it unfair to endanger voting rights for blacks and formed a pro-15th Amendment group called the American Woman Suffrage Association.

In 1890, the two groups merged to form the National American Woman Suffrage Association. Elizabeth Cady Stanton was the organization's first president.

The suffragists approach had changed from the beginning efforts. Instead of arguing that women deserve the same rights and responsibilities as men, because men and women were “created equal”, a new generation of activists argued that women deserved the vote because they were different from men. They would make domesticity into a political virtue, using the franchise to create a purer, more moral “maternal commonwealth”.

Getting closer to suffrage, still 30 years away....

Suffrage Trivia

What did the night of November 14, 1917 become known as after suffragists were beaten and tortured at the Occoquan Workhouse Prison?

- a. Suffrage Night
- b. Night of Fright
- c. Rebellion Night
- d. Night of Terror

Answer next issue.

The answer to the last trivia question of “which African American abolitionist, who became an activist leader after escaping slavery, spoke in favor of women's suffrage at the Seneca Falls Convention in July 1848?”

Frederick Douglass was one of a few men present at the Seneca Falls Convention. His support of women's rights never wavered and was a constant champion of the right of women to vote.