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Early Days of the Women's Suffrage Movement

"Failure is Impossible" ~Susan B. Anthony



Susan B. Anthony

It was a short 162 years ago when a small group of women and men met to discuss what was then considered a most radical idea: that women should have the right to vote. It was in 1848 and their work launched what would turn out to be a 72-year fight for suffrage. The first Women's Rights Convention was held in Seneca Falls, New York (now referred to as the birthplace of Women's Rights). At the Wesleyan

Chapel, the attendees ratified the "Declaration of Sentiments." Modeled on the Declaration of Independence, the Declaration of Sentiments had language that was probably regarded as heresy at the time "that all men and women are created equal." The Declaration of Sentiments contained 18 grievances - the first of which read "He has never permitted her to exercise her inalienable right to the elective franchise." Other grievances included women not having the right to an education, women being denied the right to own property, and women being denied the ability to be awarded custody of their children in the case of a divorce.

Women who would later be regarded as quite remarkable - certainly not well behaved - had worked many years to make this Convention a possibility. The two key figures were Lucretia Mott and Elizabeth Cady Stanton. Mott and Stanton had met in London at the World Anti-Slavery Convention where Mott was a delegate. Stanton was attending the Convention on her honeymoon; her husband was a delegate. The two women bonded when Mott was denied a seat as she was a woman. Together, they vowed to work for both women's rights and the abolition of slavery. It was eight years before they met again; Stanton used the time to draft the Declaration of Sentiments.



Lucretia Mott

Three hundred women and men met in Seneca Falls where they debated and refined the Declaration of Sentiments. It was issued after the Convention was concluded. The organizers of the Convention would certainly have been discouraged if they had known that the fight would take 72 years and that only one of the attendees would be alive to witness the ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution in 1920. But, they would have agreed with another fellow suffragist Susan B. Anthony's final words "***Failure is Impossible.***"



Elizabeth Cady Stanton

Women's suffrage had to become a reality...

Next Month:
Celebrating the 90th Anniversary of Women's Suffrage
1920 - 2010

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