



Women Who Network Change the World

As we think about women and their friendships during the month of September, we are drawn to the thought that women change the world through their networks of friends and acquaintances. Five women who changed the world met in Waterloo, New York and decided to hold the first Women's Rights Convention. As a result of that convention (held in Seneca Falls, New York on July 19-20, 1848 at the Wesleyan Chapel), and many years of effort by them and by others, today women have the right to vote, the right to own property, the right to an education, and the right to custody of their children in the case of a divorce. In this column we discuss the power of friendship and networking among these five women: Lucretia Mott, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Martha Coffin Wright, Jane Hunt and Mary Ann M'Clintock. We'd also like to challenge you to expand the networks to which you belong.

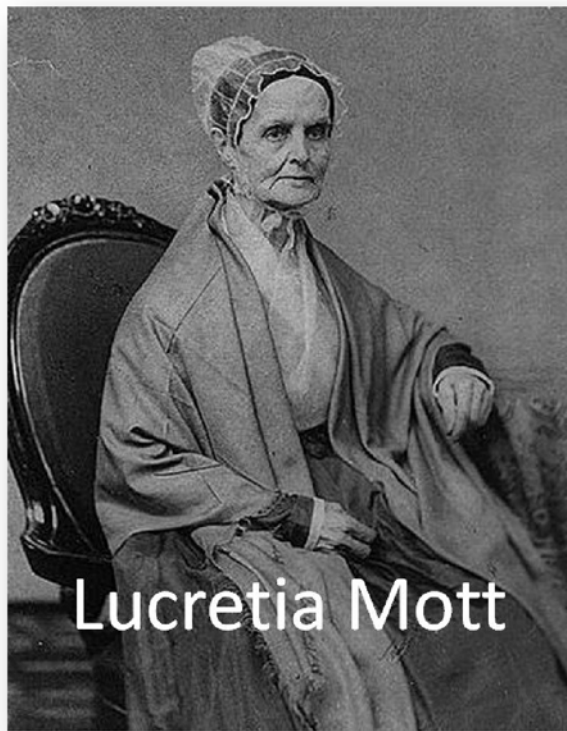


Lucretia Mott and **Elizabeth Cady Stanton** first met in 1840 in London, England at the World Anti-Slavery Convention. Lucretia Mott was a delegate to that convention. But she was denied a seat – as were all women delegates. Stanton was in London on her honeymoon as her husband was a delegate. She and Mott bonded during the convention and agreed to hold a meeting when they returned home. They wanted to focus on a discussion of the rights of women.

It was fortuitous that Lucretia Mott (a well-known Quaker minister and reformer from Philadelphia) was invited to Waterloo, New York and to **Jane Hunt's** home for a tea party on July 9, 1848. Mott was staying at her sister's house in Auburn, New York, so she brought her sister, **Martha Coffin Wright** with her. Also in attendance at the tea party was Elizabeth Cady Stanton and a Waterloo neighbor and extended family member of Hunt's, **Mary Ann M'Clintock**.

Here, when Stanton saw Mott again, Stanton was inspired to pour out her long-standing discontent on the status of women. After discussing the social position of women, the five women decided to hold the first Women's Rights Convention in Seneca Falls. Their goals were both discussion and protest. By the end of that momentous tea party, they had written a notice for the *Seneca County Courier* (printed on July 11, 1848) that invited all women to attend the influential event.

Three hundred people, including 42 men, crowded into the Wesleyan Chapel in Seneca Falls to attend that first convention. James Mott, husband of Lucretia Mott and a strong advocate for women's rights, served as the Chair. (Remember that at this time, women did not speak in public and thus had no experience in chairing meetings.) On July 19, 1848, the Declaration of Sentiments was presented by Stanton.



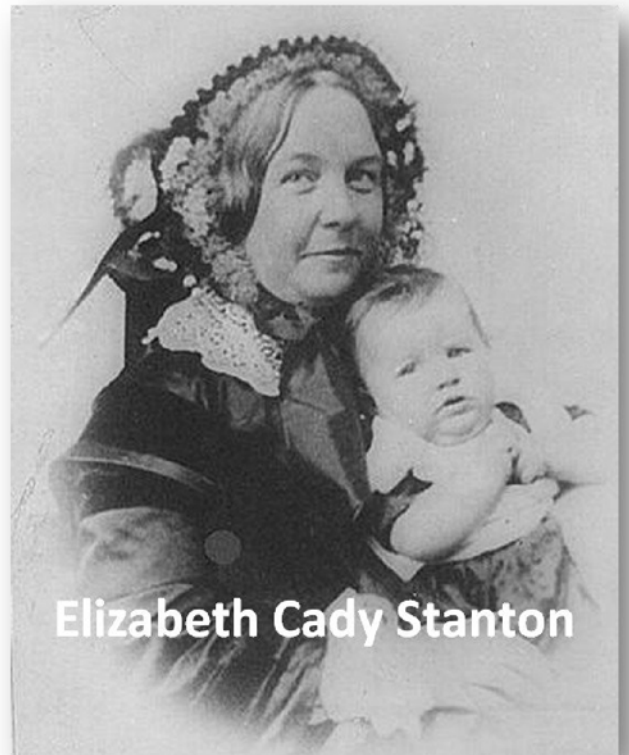
Lucretia Mott

This document, modeled on the Declaration of Independence, also followed many themes known and espoused by the anti-slavery movement. Its words “We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men and women are created equal;” were probably regarded as heresy at the time. The document presented eighteen grievances of women including the denial of the right to vote, the right to own property, the right to an education, and others.

On the second day of the convention, abolitionist Frederick Douglass made a powerful speech that served to unify the two causes of abolishing slavery and women’s rights. On that day, the convention voted on and approved the Declaration of Sentiments. After the vote, 68 women and 32 men signed the document. The fight for women’s suffrage, which would take 72 years, had begun.

Who were these five women? Jane Hunt was the wife of the richest man in Seneca County, New York. She had married into an extended Quaker family that included the M’Clintocks. She and Mary Ann M’Clintock were ardent abolitionists who were involved with the Underground Railroad. The Hunts owned a factory that specialized in woolen textiles; the factory boycotted slave-labor cotton. The Hunt’s carriage house was available to poor travelers in need of lodging and was acknowledged as a station on the Underground Railroad. Mary Ann M’Clintock worked within the Western New York Anti-Slavery Society and raised funds for the Underground Railroad. The M’Clintock home was also considered a station on the Underground Railroad.

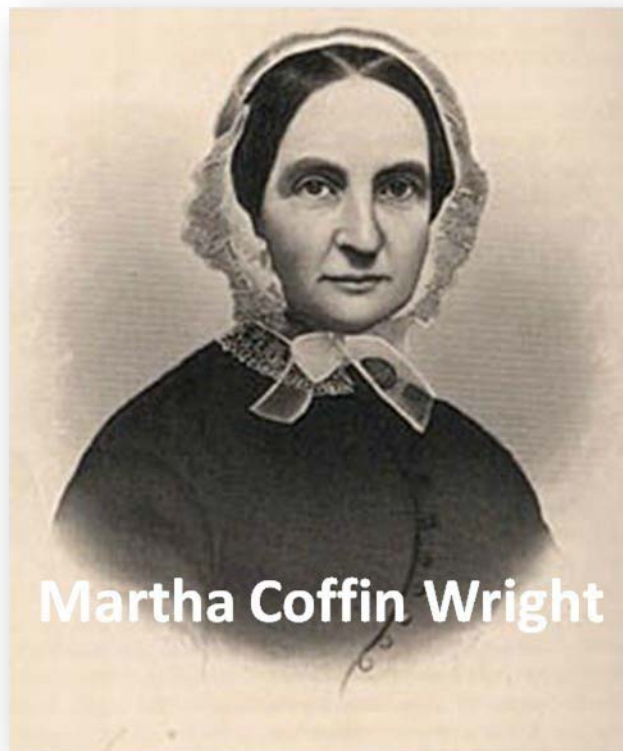
Lucretia Mott served as a Quaker minister, anti-slavery advocate and women’s rights activist. Her belief in equal rights for women was enhanced by her mother’s success as a shop-keeper during her father’s long absences, as he was a ship captain in Nantucket, Massachusetts. Martha Coffin Wright, Lucretia’s sister, was an ardent abolitionist whose home in Auburn, New York, was a station on the Under-



Elizabeth Cady Stanton

ground Railroad as well. She served in a supporting role to Lucretia in the efforts for women's rights and attended many women's rights conventions, frequently serving as secretary. Her neighbors considered her a very dangerous woman because of her work in the abolition and suffrage movements.

The only non-Quaker among the five women was Elizabeth Cady Stanton. She played a leadership role in the women's rights movement for fifty years and was the architect and author of many of the movement's most important strategies and documents. Stanton lived in Seneca Falls, New York. Later, she and Susan B. Anthony would become two strong anchors for the women's suffrage movement.



There are many other ways that networking can serve to your advantage. Find some like-minded individuals and explore what your community needs to flourish. Are your schools doing all they should and might do? Are your police, fire, libraries and other public entities serving you well? Are you contributing to a non-profit that is meaningful to you? Do you need more stimulating work? Do you want to read and enrich your life in that way? There is much to be done and networking with other like-minded individuals can make the work both enjoyable and enriching. Think about your networks and the people you know. How are you changing the world?

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