

The Magic Sash Episode 2: "A Declaration"

This lesson plan accompanies Episode 2 of the podcast *The Magic Sash*, produced through a partnership of the Women's Suffrage Centennial Commission, National Park Service, public media organization PRX, and Gen-Z Media.

GUIDING QUESTION

Why do groups supporting different movements sometimes work together?

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- 1 Students will understand and summarize the importance of the "Declaration of Sentiments."
- 2 Students will analyze text and a map to explain why Seneca Falls and the surrounding area was the location for the Women's Rights Convention of 1848.
- 3 Students will compare and contrast the goals of the women's rights and anti-slavery movements and explain why some leaders supported both movements.

MEET THE MAIN CHARACTERS



Frederick Douglass (1818–1895) Douglass was a powerful speaker and promoter of equality for everyone. As a young man, he escaped slavery in Maryland and traveled north, becoming an abolitionist. He published a newspaper in Rochester, New York, called *The North Star*. At the 1848 Women's Rights Convention in Seneca Falls, Douglass seconded Elizabeth Cady Stanton's motion for women's voting rights.



Susan B. Anthony (1820–1906) Best known as a national leader in efforts to achieve voting rights for women, Anthony participated in many other progressive movements. Anthony met Elizabeth Cady Stanton in 1851, and together they organized activities that supported the abolition of slavery, equal rights for women and African Americans, voting rights for women, and limiting the drinking of alcohol.

Frederick Douglass (above); Susan B. Anthony.

ANTHONY—FROM *THE HISTORY OF WOMAN SUFFRAGE*, 1881
OTHER IMAGES NPS UNLESS CREDITED

IMPORTANT WORDS TO REMEMBER

Declaration A formal announcement or statement

Sentiment An opinion or specific view of an issue

Movement An organized effort to promote a goal or improve conditions

Abolition To officially end or stop something

Suffrage The right to vote

LISTEN TO THE PODCAST

["A Declaration"](#)

<https://www.nps.gov/subjects/womenshistory/magicsashep2.htm>

FIND THE LOCATION

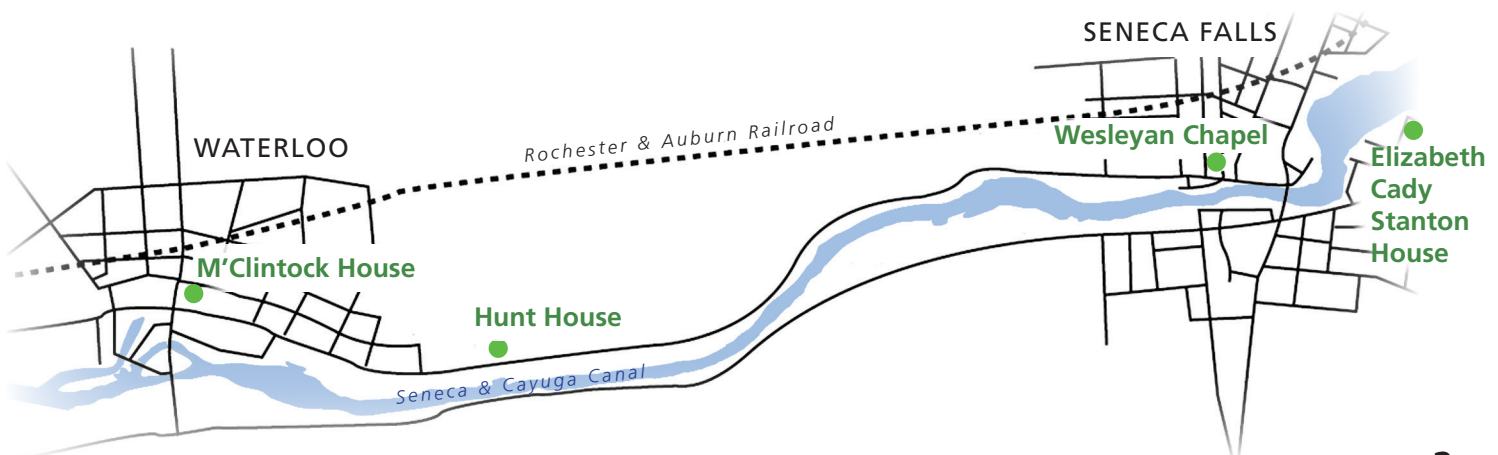
Wesleyan Chapel, Seneca Falls, New York

John Wesley and other American Methodist leaders were anti-slavery, while many Methodist Episcopal Church leaders supported slavery. As a result, the Wesleyan Methodist Society split from the Methodist Episcopal Church. The First Wesleyan Methodist Society of Seneca Falls was formed in 1843 specifically to support abolition of slavery. At least 60 Methodists organized to purchase a lot on the corner of Fall and State streets to build a meetinghouse.

- 1 Locate the site of the Wesleyan Chapel in Seneca Falls, New York on this map from the 1850s.
- 2 What other buildings are in the area?
- 3 Why do you think the Wesleyan Chapel was selected as the site of the Women's Rights Convention in 1848?



Wesleyan Chapel



BACKGROUND HISTORY

The Declaration of Sentiments and the Women's Rights and Anti-slavery Movements

In the 1800s, it was not always easy to achieve what many people believed to be the perfect family and home. Many families needed both parents to work outside the home to earn enough money. Many women that had jobs outside the home were also expected to handle most of the household responsibilities. Middle-class women who did not have to work a job outside of the home often found their lives frustrating and exhausting.

[Elizabeth Cady Stanton](#) lived in the town of Seneca Falls, New York. Her family had enough money to hire servants to help with household chores. However, Stanton complained about her household responsibilities and not having anything interesting to keep her mind busy. Stanton and other women who had similar feelings began organizing to make changes in women's lives.

Even without the vote, women had found ways to make their voices heard. Some took part in religious movements. Others worked to end slavery or change laws to limit the drinking of alcohol. Still, it was difficult for them to achieve their goals because of laws, beliefs, and customs that limited women's rights. Stanton and other female delegates were not allowed to take seats at the World Anti-Slavery Convention that took place in London in 1840. The men at the convention blocked them from sitting down.

In 1848 Stanton went to a tea party with women activists who would become her collaborators: Lucretia Mott, Martha C. Wright, Jane Hunt, and Mary Ann M'Clintock. These women talked about their frustrations and from that discussion the idea for the Seneca Falls Convention formed.

Over the next week, Stanton, M'Clintock, Mott, Wright, and Hunt planned the Seneca Falls Convention at Mary Ann M'Clintock's family home. There, the women wrote the famous "[Declaration of Sentiments.](#)" The document outlined their views on the role of women in society. They modeled it after the Declaration of Independence, which proclaimed the founding of the United States of America as a new nation separate from Great Britain.



Elizabeth Cady Stanton House



M'Clintock House



From top: Elizabeth Cady Stanton with daughter Harriot, Lucretia Mott, Martha Wright, Mary Ann M'Clintock, and Jane Hunt.

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

On July 19–20, 1848, the women held the First Women's Rights Convention at Seneca Falls. More than 300 people attended, and most were women. About 40 men joined the convention as well, including African American abolitionist Frederick Douglass. Douglass met Mary Ann M'Clintock's daughter, Elizabeth, through their work with the Western New York Anti-Slavery Society. M'Clintock invited Douglass to participate at the convention in Seneca Falls. The M'Clintock family also played a part at the event. Thomas M'Clintock was convention president. Elizabeth M'Clintock, served as secretary.

At the convention, Stanton presented the organizers' concerns and demands. For two days, participants discussed the rights women had and the rights they still wished to achieve. Through these discussions, they edited and developed a final version of the "Declaration of Sentiments." Finally, 68 women and 32 men signed their names to the document. At least half of the people who signed were from the nearby town of Waterloo, New York, including the M'Clintocks and the Hunts.

The members then debated 12 resolutions that called for equality for women, including the right to vote in public elections. This debate among women's rights activists showed just how deep-rooted beliefs were that women should stay out of politics. Even among the convention participants, the call for a woman's right to vote did not get wide support. The resolution was passed only after Frederick Douglass argued in favor of it.

THINK ABOUT IT

- 1 Why do you think Elizabeth Cady Stanton encourages both Lotty and Isaiah to attend the Women's Rights Convention? Isaiah says he thinks it's only for girls. What did she mean when she said, "the fight for women's rights is the fight for all rights"?
- 2 Did some of the language in the Declaration of Sentiments that Elizabeth Cady Stanton read at the Women's Rights Convention sound familiar to you? What words or phrases did you recognize? Did you hear anything in her speech that sounded new or different?
- 3 Why would an abolitionist leader like Frederick Douglass (a man) want to speak at the Women's Rights Convention? What might the women's rights and anti-slavery movements have in common?

ACTIVITY

Write a declaration of your “sentiments”

In this episode, Elizabeth Cady Stanton reads the Declaration of Sentiments to the convention participants. She begins by quoting from the Declaration of Independence but soon adds language that specifically includes women. Think about something that you feel strongly about and could be the subject of your own “declaration of sentiments.” Consider writing a declaration about the topic of your poster from last week’s activity. Think about a place or audience where you can read your declaration when it’s completed. Perhaps you could plan an event to feature your declaration and your poster. Some points to consider:

- Who will be the audience to hear your declaration? Maybe you could mention them in the beginning of your declaration to get their attention.
- What are the main points you would like your audience to know about the issue?
- What are the things you think could be better or what things do you think are good the way they are?
- What actions do you want your audience to take in response to your declaration?



PLACES

To learn more about the people and settings for the 1848 Women’s Rights Convention, visit Womens Rights National Historical Park <https://www.nps.gov/wori/index.htm>