



Elizabeth Cady Stanton's Life in Seneca Falls



Elizabeth Cady Stanton and her growing family lived in Seneca Falls from 1847 to 1862. During that time Stanton helped organize the 1848 First Woman's Rights Convention and launched the reform movement for women's rights to which she dedicated the rest of her life.

Growing Up

Elizabeth Cady was born in Johnstown, New York on November 12, 1815, the daughter of Daniel Cady, a lawyer, a judge, and land speculator, and Margaret Livingston Cady. Elizabeth was educated at a local boys school and graduated from the Troy Female Seminary in Troy, New York in 1832.

She met Henry Brewster Stanton in Peterboro, New York, at the home of her cousin, philanthropist Gerrit Smith. Henry was a popular abolitionist speaker and frequently stopped at the Smith home in the course of his lecture circuit. Against her family's wishes, she married Henry on May 1, 1840, in a ceremony that omitted the vow "to obey." Their honeymoon was a trip to the World Anti-Slavery Convention in London, where Henry was a delegate representing the American Anti-Slavery Society.

At the 1840 Convention, elected women delegates were refused admission because of their sex. After a prolonged debate, it was decided

that the women would sit at the rear of the hall, but not participate. Lucretia Mott, the Quaker reformer, was among the group sent from the floor. In the women's section she met Elizabeth Cady Stanton, who shared her indignation at this treatment of women. Stanton and Mott became friends, and vowed to hold a convention, immediately upon returning to the United States, to discuss the injustices against women.



Elizabeth Cady Stanton (center) with her sons Daniel (right) and Henry (left) in 1848.



Henry B. Stanton in 1840.

Life in Seneca Falls

When the Stantons finished with their London trip, they returned to Johnstown, where Henry studied law with Judge Cady. After Henry passed the bar exam, they set up housekeeping and started a family in Albany and then moved to Boston. Henry joined a law practice and they both became active in reform circles. They moved to Seneca Falls in 1847, as Henry was in poor health and needed a change. Elizabeth Cady Stanton's father invited her and her family to live in a house he owned at 32 Washington Street. In June 1847, Daniel Cady transferred the deed to the property to his daughter.

In Seneca Falls Elizabeth Cady Stanton first experienced the difficulties facing a wife and mother in an isolated 19th-century household. She lacked the intellectual and cultural stimulation she had enjoyed in Boston and found herself overwhelmed by childcare and housework.

She later wrote in her autobiography: "The general discontent I felt with women's portion as wife, mother, housekeeper, physician, and spiritual guide, the chaotic conditions into which everything fell without constant supervision, impressed me with a strange feeling that some active measures should be taken to remedy the wrongs... of women."



Elizabeth Cady Stanton with her second daughter Harriot in 1856. The Stanton family nearly doubled in size while in Seneca Falls. The three brothers who arrived in 1847 were joined by another in 1851, then two sisters in 1852 and 1856, then another brother in 1859.

The First Woman's Rights Convention

This newfound understanding of women's "proper sphere" led Stanton to complain vehemently to four other women friends about its injustice at a gathering held July 9, 1848, at the home of Jane and Richard Hunt. These four women (Lucretia Mott, Mary Ann M'Clintock, Martha Wright, and Jane Hunt – all wives and mothers) understood Stanton's frustrations. Also, as active anti-slavery and temperance reformers, they had experienced discrimination by male coworkers. Together they decided to call a woman's rights convention to publicly discuss these injustices against women. Lucretia Mott later reminded Stanton, "Remember, the first convention originated with thee."



Lucretia Coffin Mott
around 1850.

Alongside Susan B. Anthony: *I forged the thunderbolts and she fired them*

For Elizabeth Cady Stanton, actually taking the first step to change her unhappy state made all the difference. She began to write, recruit, strategize, network, and organize for the cause of women's rights. By 1859 her family responsibilities kept her at home with her husband and seven children to look after. Stanton managed to combine her public and private lives by opening her home to those who were free to travel and speak about advocating equal rights for women. She called her home "The Center of the Rebellion."

In May 1851, Amelia Bloomer introduced Susan B. Anthony to Elizabeth Cady Stanton. Thus began a friendship which lasted over fifty years. As a single woman, Anthony was free of many of the domestic duties that tied Stanton to her home, which allowed Anthony to travel and make speeches promoting women's rights. To give Stanton time to write those speeches, Anthony visited Seneca Falls and helped care for the growing Stanton family. She then took the speeches and writings produced by Stanton and traveled the countryside campaigning for women's rights.

...we took turns on the domestic watchtowers, directing amusements, settling disputes, protecting the weak against the strong, and trying to secure equal rights to all in the home as well as the nation. Elizabeth Cady Stanton, 1898.



Elizabeth Cady Stanton
around 1865.



Susan B. Anthony
around 1865.

After Seneca Falls

Elizabeth Cady Stanton was a determined advocate and unwavering voice for full rights of citizenship for women and nothing less. In 1862, the Stanton family moved to New York City, where Stanton continued to work for the women's rights movement in the U.S. and abroad. She believed that the movement should work for a broad platform of change for women's citizenship, including: woman suffrage, dress reform, girls' sports, equal employment, property rights, equal wages, divorce and custody law reform, collective households, coeducation, and religious reform.

After her children were grown Stanton wrote and lectured on all aspects of women's rights and on many other current topics as well. She began to travel the county, and her talks on women's issues were popular and well received. She also co-authored the three volume *History of Woman Suffrage*, before publishing her autobiography and the controversial *Woman's Bible*. Though ill health prevented her from traveling much in later life, she continued to write on women's rights until her death in 1902.



Elizabeth Cady Stanton
and Susan B. Anthony
around 1890.



Elizabeth Cady Stanton
around 1890.