



## Fossenvue and the Women's Rights Movement



An early picture of the Queen's Castle.

### Background

In July 1875, a group of friends began a tradition that would last 26 years. Seven women and men – Elizabeth Smith Miller, her daughter Anne Fitzhugh Miller, Ruth Lesley Ver Planck, Emily Dilworth Snyder, Anne Palfrey Bridge, James Fowler, and William Fitzhugh Miller - established a summer camp at Caywood Point on Seneca Lake. The campers held a competition to determine the name of

their new camp, and Elizabeth Smith Miller's suggestion, Fossenvue (an anagram of "seven of us"), was chosen. For nearly three decades this camp served as a place of relaxation and intellectual stimulation as visitors discussed women's rights, politics, philosophy, and art.

### Daily Life at Fossenvue

At the end of the nineteenth century, Americans increasingly enjoyed outdoor activities for health and leisure, including swimming, hiking, and tennis. The campers at Fossenvue participated in these and many other types of activities, such as archery, singing, drawing, poetry readings, and holding philosophical and political discussions. Campers ate fresh

foods purchased from local farms and enjoyed the shady trees and cool water that flowed from the nearby spring. A steady stream of visitors to the camp arrived by boat, train, or by simply walking from the nearby roads.



Elizabeth Cady Stanton (left) and Susan B. Anthony were among those who visited the Millers at Fossenvue.

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### Connection to the Women's Rights Movement

Elizabeth Smith Miller was the daughter of Gerrit Smith, a wealthy abolitionist and cousin of the famous women's rights activist Elizabeth Cady Stanton. The two women remained close throughout their lives, and like Stanton, Miller was a staunch supporter of women's right to vote. She was the first to wear what became known as the "Bloomers," after Amelia Bloomer sketched her wearing the outfit while visiting Stanton in Seneca Falls. Miller's connection to the woman's suffrage movement naturally drew many reformers and intellectuals to Fossenvue, including

Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, Lydia Predmore, and scholars from nearby colleges. Some of the camp's visitors belonged to the Geneva Political Equality League that Miller and her daughter Anne founded in 1897 "to secure to women the unrestricted exercise of all the rights of citizenship and equal constitutional rights with men, and equal protection of the law." Elizabeth Smith Miller remained active in the women's rights movement until her death in 1911.

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### Legacy

Fossenvue's last year of operation was 1901. The only structure that remains from the time period is the Queen's Castle, a seventeen square-foot building given to Elizabeth Smith Miller (known as the "Queen of Fossenvue") on her 77th birthday in 1899. For most of the twentieth century the property was owned by the Boy Scouts of America, but in 1996 the

U.S. Forest Service added it to the Finger Lakes National Forest. The Queen's Castle has recently been restored and sits near its original location, a reminder of the legacy of the women's rights movement in New York's Finger Lakes region.