

## Chapter 162 – Women Reformers Begin To Battle For Gender Equality



**Dates:**  
1820 –  
1840's

**Sections:**

- The Second Awakening Sparks Debate Over The Roles And Rights Of Women
- Educational Advances Expand The Horizons For Women
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Date: 1820-1845

### The Second Awakening Sparks Debate Over The Roles And Rights Of Women

While the two major parties are focused on slavery and politics, a movement to reshape the roles and rights of women in society is quietly picking up momentum.

From Jamestown forward, women and men operate in different spheres, codified by Blackstone's English common law, biblical admonitions and social norms.

Men are born to rule, to be masters of their own households, to become the nation's ministers, lawyers, doctors and businessmen, to venture out into the affairs of state, participating in the militia, politics, and the civic arena.

Women's defined role is one of domesticity and subservience, first in relation to their fathers and then to their husbands.

Those who "fail" to marry become "spinsters," relegated to living at home with their likely-to-be disappointed parents.

As single women (*feme sole*), however, they do retain their personal "rights" to own property, run a business, retain wages, write and sign contracts, create a will and dispose of their own possessions.

Once married, women "surrender" these rights to their husbands under the English law of "coverture" – whereby her wishes are assumed to be "covered," or subjugated, under the will of her husband.

From then on, her charge lies in supporting her husband, first by producing heirs – ten lifetime pregnancies being common – and then by providing a well-run household. The duties here are non-stop and laborious. Laundry done with well water, cooking over an open fire, mending clothes, gardening,

milking cows, helping with crops, raising children, caring for sick family members, attending church and instilling proper moral values.

The effect is the near total exclusion of women from the civic arena. Speaking out in a public forum, especially with men present, becomes a “radical” act, and voting in elections is considered out of the question. As Thomas Jefferson put it...

*The ballot must be reserved for every man who fights and pays.*

The notion of separate spheres between the sexes is reinforced in popular publications of the day. A Southern journal sums it up as follows:

*His aspirations are for thrones and large dominions; she is queen of the household; her diadem is the social affections; her scepter, love.*

*Godey's Ladies Book* offers a “Code of Instructions For Ladies,” with a full litany of “nevers” – never contradict your husband, give advice unless asked, criticize his behavior, respond during arguments, censor his morals, and so forth.

Testimonials to the traditional hierarchy abound, this one from a contented wife in Georgia:

*True to my sex, I...love to feel my woman's weakness protected by man's superior strength.*

Few challenges to this hierarchy materialize during the Revolutionary era. The rare exceptions originate with women like the anti-British political pamphleteer, Mercy Otis Warren and Abigail Adams, the outspoken wife of the second U.S. President, who warns of a “Ladies rebellion.”

It is not, however, until the height of the Second Great Awakening phenomenon between 1820 and 1845 that America begins to seriously rethink “women's roles and rights” – along with other social reforms like temperance, slavery, debtor's prisons, poverty, and abuses of child labor and the physically handicapped.

The spirit here is every bit consistent with the nation's revolutionary instinct to challenge all orthodoxies associated with its European heritage.

Under the umbrella of “liberty and power to the individual,” Americans re-think the structure of their government, their churches, their financial institution, and their economy. How natural then to reconsider the structure within their own households – especially given its overtones of monarchy and serfdom!

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Date: 1830's Forward

### Educational Advances Expand The Horizons For Women

The women who initiate the debates on gender tend to benefit from parents who encourage their early intellectual curiosity and provide them with a formal education – often through tutors or attendance at one of the new “female seminaries” that spring up between 1820 and 1840, during the height of the Awakening.

These seminaries are the successors to earlier “dame schools” or “finishing schools,” where young girls are taught the four values required to lead a virtuous life: religious piety, submission to a husband’s will, sexual faithfulness, and home-making skills, including cooking, sewing, gardening and child care.

The founders of these new schools are intent on replacing this narrow “domesticity” curriculum with one that mirrors that being offered to males – world literature, languages, mathematics, and science. Since for-men-only colleges refuse to recognize the merits of these subjects for females, the “radicals” who start up these seminaries plow forward on their own – often under the more acceptable guise of training women to become better teachers.

Lurking within the halls of these new “female seminaries,” however, are educators like Mary Lyon of Mount Holyoke, and students like Lucy Stone, who are dedicated to using their schools to reshape the ambitions and opportunities for women in American society.

#### Earliest Colleges Admitting Women In America

Date	Name	Where	Curriculum
1742	Bethlehem Female Seminary Moravian College	Germantown, Pa.	Link to Moravian Church, becomes a secondary school for girls 8-15, broad academic curriculum along moral guidance, vocational training, physical exercise, and social skills.
1772	Single Sister’s House Salem Female Academy	Winston-Salem, N.C.	Link to Moravian Church, similar to Bethlehem on structure, among the first to accept black students.
1792	Litchfield Academy	Litchfield, Connecticut	Founded by Sarah Pierce to provide “Republican Motherhood” vision of women as capable teachers of their own children. Pierce also authors her own history textbooks.
1796	Nine Partners School	So. Millbrook, New York	Quaker run co-ed school for ages 7-15 years. Both Lucretia and James Mott attended the school and later taught there.
1803	Bradford Academy Bradford Teachers Seminary	Bradford, Mass.	Three year college prep school which shifted to women only in 1836, with focus on preparing teachers. Cost of \$4-6 per semester.
1806	Byfield Female Seminary	Byfield, Mass	Run by Congregationalist minister, Joseph Emerson, attendees include Zilpah Grant and Mary Lyon.

1811	Boston Lyceum For Young Women	Boston, Mass	Founded by educator and journalist, John Park and attended by Margaret Fuller
1818	Elizabeth Female Academy	Washington, Miss.	Methodist Church connections, with emphasis on spirituality, James Audubon taught drawing in 1822, and Varina Davis was attendee.
1821	Troy Female Seminary Emma Willard School	Troy, New York	College prep boarding school founded by Emma Willard who, with Beecher and Lyon, created curriculum matching that taught to boys. Grads include Elizabeth Cady Stanton.
1823	Hartford Female Academy	Hartford, Connecticut	Founded by educator, Catharine Beecher, with emphasis on early childhood education.
1825	Science Hill School	Shelbyville, Ky	Founder is Julia Ann Hieronymous Tevis, with focus on teaching science to young women.
1827	Linden Wood School For Girls	St. Charles, Missouri	Presbyterian Church, founded by the teacher, Mary Easton, and her explorer husband, George Sibley. Full range of courses for college prep.
1828	Ipswich Female Seminary	Ipswich, Mass.	Founded by Zilpah Grant, colleague of Mary Lyon, focus on joy of learning vs. rote memorization.
1830	Charleston Female Seminary	Charleston, Mass.	Opened by Baptist ministers, then educator Martha Whiting, attendees include Mary Livermore
1833	Columbia Female Academy	Columbia, Missouri	Baptist link, first mistress was Lucy Wales, college prep.
1833	Friends Select School	Philadelphia, Pa.	Quaker run, Anna Dickinson attended.
1834	Wheaton Female Seminary	Norton, Mass	Founded by education pioneer, Mary Lyon, with "curriculum mirroring that offered to men." No church ties.
1837	St. Mary's Hall	Burlington, New Jersey	All-girls academic boarding school, founded by Episcopal Bishop, George Doane.
1837	Mount Holyoke Female Academy	South Hadley, Mass.	Educator Mary Lyon's finest legacy, emphasizes science and math, moral purpose, physical fitness, campus work to defray costs, affordable to all, major advances in educating teachers. Sister school to Andover Academy For Boys.
1839	Georgia Female College Wesleyan Female College	Macon, Georgia	Methodist Church links, first president was Rev. George Pierce, college level courses focused on the sciences.
1842	Quaboag Seminary	Warren, Mass	College prep for both sexes, Lucy Stone attends before going on to Oberlin.
1844	St. Mary's College	Notre Dame, Indiana	Sisters of the Holy Cross of France, Catholic college prep boarding school.

1848	Philadelphia School of Design for Women	Philadelphia, Pa.	Founded by Sarah Worthington King to prepare poor women with skills to enter trade, teaches wood carving, lithography and household design.
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Each of the four women who will lead the “Women’s Movement” attend one of these progressive schools -- Lucretia Mott (Nine Partners), Elizabeth Cady Stanton (Troy), Lucy Stone (Oberlin College), and Susan B. Anthony (Moulson’s Female Seminary).

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Date: 1776 Forward

**Roll Call For The Women’s Rights Movement**



Lydia Marie Child (1902-1880)



Mary Livermore (1820-1905)



Louisa May Alcott (1832-1888)

But early education is only one mark of those who will lead the Women’s Movement.

With few exceptions, they are all confirmed, and activist, abolitionists.

Several join Lloyd Garrison’s inner circle --Lucretia Mott becomes, in effect, his spiritual advisor; Sojourner Truth, the Grimke sisters, Abby Kelley and Maria Weston Chapman are traveling lecturers and agents; Margaret Fuller, Lydia Marie Child, Anna Dickinson and others contribute essays to his *Liberator* newspaper.

Religion typically plays a significant role in their upbringing. Several are Quakers, among them Mott, the Grimke’s, and Abby Kelley. Some belong to mainstream Protestant sects or break-aways, such as the Unitarians (Lucy Stone, Howe, Chapman, and Alcott) and the Universalists. Others, like Susan B.

Anthony, move from one sect to another, only to abandon all formal affiliation out of frustration with the failure of church officials to deal with the “degradations” suffered by blacks and women.

A few are so-called “Freethinkers” from early on, aware of the formal religious traditions, but inclined to rely on their own reason and instincts to move through life. The utopian socialist Fanny Wright and the precocious Lydia Marie Child belong here – as does the always unconventional Elizabeth Cady Stanton.

With very few exceptions, women in the movement marry – almost always to husbands who are supportive of their full equality. Most also become mothers, although as a group they are much less inclined toward very large families common at the time. Stanton is one exception, giving birth on eight separate occasions.

Even with only one or two children, they are left with the challenge of taking care of their families, while simultaneously devoting their remaining time to their causes and personal careers. These careers are fundamental to altering their spheres of influence, beyond home and church, and into arenas historically reserved for men.

Many begin in a safe zone by teaching or tutoring. From there, however, they break out in multiple directions.

Some establish and run their own academies: Sarah Pierce, Zilpah Grant, Mary Easton, Emma Willard, Mary Lyon, Catherine Beecher.

Others turn to writing, from fiction and poetry (Alcott, Child) to hard-hitting essays (Warren, Fuller, Stanton, Child, McClintock, Howe) to running newspapers (Mary Shad Cary, the Forten sisters, Fuller, Stanton, Anthony, and others).

Lucretia Mott and Antoinette Brown Blackwell are both ordained ministers, the former in the Quaker Church, the latter a Congregationalist. Mary Walker earns an MD degree and practices medicine, while others labor as nurses.

Many are responsible for founding and operating major reform organizations. Early on they include the Female Anti-Slavery Societies, in Philadelphia (Mott, the sisters Grimke and Forten) and in Boston (Maria Weston Chapman). When the American Anti-Slavery Society finally admits women – in 1839, six years after its founding – the roster includes Mott, the Grimkes, Kelley, Stanton, Stone, Anthony and others.

Later on, Stanton and Anthony found the National Woman Suffrage Association (1869), Stone and Brown the American Woman Suffrage Association (1869) and Francis Willard the Women’s Christian Temperance Union (1873).

Together these courageous leaders will fundamentally change the rights and roles of women during the second half of the nineteenth century.

**Some Of The Leading Figures In The Women's Movement During The 19<sup>th</sup> Century**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Dates</b>	<b>Their Education</b>	<b>Religion</b>	<b>Marry?</b>	<b>Abol?</b>
Mercy Otis Warren	1728-1814	Tutored by local minister	Puritan	Y- 5 children	
Abigail Adams	1744-1818	Home schooled by mother	Unitarian	Y- 6	
Sarah Pierce	1767-1852	NY school for teachers	Presby		
Emma Willard	1787-1870	Public school in Berlin, Conn.	Christian	Y-1	
Sarah Grimke	1792-1873	Private tutors on plantation	Quaker	Y-0	Y
Lucretia Coffin Mott	1793-1880	Nine Partners School	Quaker	Y-6	Y
Zilpah P. Grant	1794-1874	Byfield Female Seminary	Congreg.	Y-0	
Fanny Wright	1795-1852	Home school in UK by aunt	Freethinker	Y-1	Y
Mary Lyon	1797-1849	Byfield Female Seminary	Congreg.		
Sojourner Truth *	1797-1883	Enslaved, education banned	Methodist	Y-5	Y
Catharine Beecher	1800-1878	Litchfield Academy + self-taught	Presby		
Mary Easton Sibley	1800-1878	Women's boarding school in Ky.	Presby	Y-0	
Mary Ann McClintock	1800-1884	Westtown School	Quaker	Y-5	Y
Lydia Maria Child	1802-1880	Self-taught	Freethinker	Y-0	Y
Amy Post	1802-1889	Self-taught	Quaker	Y-4	Y
Angelina Grimke Weld	1805-1879	Private tutors on plantation	Quaker	Y-0	Y
William Lloyd Garrison	1805-1879				
Martha Coffin Wright	1806-1875	Quaker schools in Philadelphia	Quaker/left	Y-7	Y
Margaretta Forten *	1806-1875	Private black academy in Phil	AME		Y
Maria Weston Chapman	1806-1885	Schools in UK	Unitarian	Y-4	Y
Margaret Fuller	1810-1850	Father tutor, then Boston Lyceum	Transcend.	Y-1	Y
Harriet Forten Purvis *	1810-1875	Private black academy in Phil	AME	Y-8	Y

William Henry Channing	1810-1884				
Ernestine Potovsky Rose	1810-1892	Hebrew school in Poland	Judaism/left	Y-0	Y
Abby Kelley Foster	1811-1887	New England Friends School	Quaker	Y-1	Y
Wendell Phillips	1811-1884				
Jane Hunt	1812-1889	Home school	Quaker	Y-4	Y
Paulina Wright Davis	1813-1876	Public school in NY	Presby	Y-2	Y
Elizabeth Cady Stanton	1815-1902	Troy Female Seminary	Freethinker	Y-8	Y
Lucy Colman	1817-1906	Self-taught	Spiritualist	Y-1	Y
Lucy Stone	1818-1893	Oberlin College '50	Unitarian	Y-1	Y
Amelia Bloomer	1818-1894	New York public grade school	Episcopal		
Julia Ward Howe	1818-1910	Home schooled by tutors	Unitarian	Y-6	Y
Susan B. Anthony	1820-1906	Moulson's Female Seminary	Q/Uni/left		Y
Mary Livermore	1820-1905	Charleston Female Seminary	Universalist	Y-0	Y
Elizabeth Smith Miller	1822-1911	Philadelphia Friends School	Unknown		Y
Mary Ann Shadd Cary *	1823-1893	Quaker school in Pa.	AME/left	Y-2	Y
Edna Dow Cheney	1824-1905	Private girls schools	Transcend.	Y-2	Y
Antoinette Brown Blackwell	1825-1921	Oberlin College '47	Congreg.	Y-7	
Thomas Higginson	1828-1911				
Louisa May Alcott	1832-1888	Father + Transcendentalist tutors	Unitarian		Y
Dr. Mary Walker	1832-1919	Syracuse Medical College	Freethinker	Y-0/Divorce	Y
Victoria Woodhull	1838-1927	Public grade school in Ohio	Spiritualist	Y-2/Divorce	
Frances Willard	1839-1898	Northwestern Female College	Methodist		
Anna Dickinson	1842-1932	Friends Select School in Pa.	Quaker		Y

\* African-Americans Y=Yes, Blank=No

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Date: 1820 Forward

## Lucretia Mott Emerges As The Role Model For The Women's Movement



Lucretia Mott (1793-1880)

No single figure has greater impact on the women's movement than Lucretia Coffin Mott.

Her remarkable life begins in 1793 on the island of Nantucket, some thirty miles south of Cape Cod, Massachusetts. Her father is a seafarer, captain of a sailing vessel, trading in seal skins, voyaging as far away as South America and China. His often year-long absences place the burden of caring for the family -- which includes eight children -- and for a small supply store, directly into the hands of his wife. Later in life, Lucretia recalls the skills and independence evidenced by the women of the Island while their husbands were away.

*I remember how our mothers were employed, while our fathers were at sea. They were obliged to go to Boston... mingle with men, make their trades and with all of this, have very little help in the family, to which they must discharge their duties.*

In addition to witnessing and admiring her mother's self-confidence and initiative, she also grows up in a Quaker community that rejects hierarchical privilege, believes in co-education, encourage women to think for themselves, to speak up in mixed public forums, even to serve in the official church ministry.

In 1804 the Coffin family moves to Boston, with her father transitioning from the risky life at sea to more stable pursuits as a tradesman. At age thirteen, Lucretia begins her studies at the Nine Partners co-educational school in Poughkeepsie, NY. The venue is a Quaker Meeting House and the superintendent is one Adam Mott, who fosters a sense of duty among his students on behalf of abolition. Lucretia is moved by her reading about slavery and by those who speak against it like the Quaker preacher, Elias Hicks.

*My sympathy was early enlisted for the poor slave, by the class-books read in our schools, and the pictures of the slave-ship, as published by Clarkson. The ministry of Elias Hicks and others, on the subject of the unrequited labor of slaves, and their example in refusing the products of slave labor, all had their effect in awakening a strong feeling in their behalf.*

From Hicks, Lucretia is also persuaded that one's moral compass should be guided by "obedience to the light within" rather than conformity to often misguided institutional norms.

By fifteen, she is hired at Nine Partners as an assistant teacher, and learns a distressing lesson about such norms around the issue of wage difference between women and men.

*The unequal condition of women in society also early impressed my mind. Learning, while at school, that when they became teachers, women received but half as much as men for their services, the injustice of this was so apparent, that I early resolved to claim for my sex all that an impartial Creator had bestowed.*

One of Lucretia's fellow teachers is James Mott, son of the superintendent, and the man she marries in 1811, after her family moves to Philadelphia. Together they will become activists on behalf of abolition and gender equality over the next 57 years together, up to his death in 1867.

Putting an end to slavery tops Lucretia's list from the beginning. In 1815 she joins forces with another Quaker, Benjamin Lundy, in trying to convince the Friends General Assembly to publicly support abolition. In 1819 she sees slaves first-hand on a trip into Virginia.

*The sight of the poor slaves was indeed affecting: though...we were told their situation was rendered less deplorable, by kind treatment from their masters.*

While raising her children – eventually numbering six – she masters her Bible studies to the point where, in 1821, age twenty-eight, she is ordained as a Quaker minister. From there she is drawn into leading “a more public life:”

*At twenty-five years of age, surrounded with a little family and many cares, I felt called to a more public life of devotion to duty, and engaged in the ministry in our Society, receiving every encouragement from those in authority, until a separation among us...when my convictions led me to adhere to the sufficiency of the light within us, resting on truth as authority, rather than taking authority for truth.*

This puts her on-stage in front of large audiences for the first time. It instills the courage she will need to advocate in public for her causes, as well as providing a model for other women to participate in civil discourse.

In 1823 she and James initiate the Philadelphia Free Produce Society, a co-op dedicated to boycotting the use of all products derived from slave labor – from sugar to cotton to tobacco. Conforming to this ban proves challenging to the Mott's financial future, and it comes at a time of pressure from within the Quaker community to denounce their “Hicksite” convictions.

Lucretia simply moves forward amidst the upheavals, balancing her private and public responsibilities. This trait is repeatedly commented upon by other women...

*She is proof that it is possible for a woman to widen her sphere without deserting her home life.*

On January 1, 1831, the nascent abolitionist movement is transformed by William Lloyd Garrison, a new arrival, who publishes the first edition of his paper, *The Liberator*, announcing that...

*I shall strenuously contend for the immediate enfranchisement of our slave population.... I am in earnest — I will not equivocate — I will not excuse — I will not retreat a single inch — **AND I WILL BE HEARD.***

Garrison is quick to mobilize his forces, and in December 1833 some 62 delegates (21 Quakers) meet in Philadelphia to found the American Anti-Slavery Society, which, over the next five years will boast a quarter million members, eventually including the four main leaders of the Women's Rights movement, Mott, Stanton, Stone and Anthony.

At the opening convention, however, a vote is taken and women are denied membership!

Despite this affront, Lucretia is undismayed, and speaks out at the plenary session about the wording of the "pledge of faith." This meeting also marks the beginning what will be her lifelong association with Lloyd Garrison.

Along with Lydia Maria Child and Margaretta Forten, the African-American daughter of the black abolitionist, James Forten, Mott soon founds the Philadelphia Female Anti-Slavery Society. Its mission includes gathering petitions, collecting money for black schools, writing pamphlets and lecturing to public audiences. In 1835 the fiery southern white abolitionist Angelina Grimke joins Mott as an itinerant lecturer, further emboldening more women to speak their minds on a range of reform issues.

Along with their zeal comes not only verbal abuse but also physical risk. In 1838 a mob breaks up an anti-slavery meeting at the Pennsylvania Hall, then burns it to the ground and threatens the homes of local abolitionists, including Lucretia and James Mott. Such attacks are not unusual and the gentle "Mother Mott" will continue to face them.

In June 1840, at the first World Anti-Slavery Convention in London, the Women's Rights movement becomes a cause celebre. The meeting is called to applaud the English for freeing some 800,000 slaves since their emancipation act of 1833, and to encourage other nations, especially the U.S., to follow suit. A total of roughly 300 official delegates are present, including 50 from America. Seven women are invited, among them the now famous Mott and the baroness widow of the English poet, Lord Byron.

At the opening session, the question of seating the female delegates suddenly takes center stage, with a lively debate consuming most of the day. One irate U.S. delegate sums up the situation as follows....

*What a misnomer to call this a world convention of abolitionists when some of the oldest and most thorough going supporters are denied the right to be represented.*

But a final vote goes against the women by a 90% nay to 10% yea margin, and the females, including Lucretia Mott, are forced to observe the session away from the official floor. This well-publicized "degradation" will energize those a host of women intent on changing their status in society.

The 1840 London Convention is also remembered as the first encounter between the 47 year old icon, Mott, and one of her eventual protégés, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, the 24 year old newlywed accompanying her husband Henry Stanton, a US delegate. Elizabeth's reaction to Mott is one of awe:

*It seemed to me like meeting a being from some larger planet, to find a woman who dared question the opinions of Popes, Kings, Synods, Parliaments, with the same freedom that she would criticize an editorial in the London Times, recognizing no higher authority than the judgment of a pure-minded, educated woman.*

Mott is likewise impressed by Stanton's views on changing the standing of women and by her self-assurance. Over the next eight years, the two are in frequent touch, with the culmination being the landmark Seneca Falls Convention of 1848, and Stanton's famous Declaration of Sentiments on behalf of women.

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Date: 1830 Forward

### **Elizabeth Cady Stanton Becomes Chief Strategist For The Women's Movement**



Elizabeth Cady Stanton (1815-1902)

Stanton's family lineage is considerably more prestigious than others in the inner circle of the women's movement.

Her maternal roots trace back to Colonel James Livingston, whose service in the Revolutionary War is rewarded with a 3500 acre land grant in New York state. One of his daughters marries Peter Smith, a fabulously wealthy partner of John Jacob Astor, and father of the philanthropist reformer, Gerrit Smith. Another daughter, Margaret, weds Daniel Cady, a prosperous attorney, who serves a term in the U.S. House (1815-17), before eventually being named a justice on the New York Supreme Court.

"Judge Cady" and Margaret have eleven children, with Elizabeth, born in 1815, the eighth in line. She is raised in Johnstown, New York, amidst privileges that include horseback riding, chess lessons, access to her father's extensive library, and a formal education -- first in a local grammar school and then at Troy Female Seminary, Emma Willard's college prep boarding school which opens in 1821. She enrolls there in 1831, at age sixteen, and completes an academic curriculum, from math to science, classical languages, religion and composition.

Reflecting on her youth, she later admits to the pain of her father's "preference for boys," and her desire to win his affection by matching her brother's every accomplishments. Her formula is simple:

*I thought that the chief thing to be done in order to equal boys was to be learned and courageous. So I decided to study Greek and learn to manage a horse.*

After graduating from Troy, she connects with her well-to-do cousin, Gerritt Smith, eighteen years her senior, and his circle of friends, already engaged in temperance and abolitionist activities. Ironically Elizabeth has grown up with a slave in her own household, owned by her father until freed in 1827 under New York law.

One of Gerritt Smith's acquaintances is Henry Stanton, who begins his career as a journalist before enrolling in 1832 at Lane Theological Seminary, intending to become a Presbyterian minister. The school

is embroiled at the time with debates over slavery, and Stanton leaves before graduation to become a lecturer on behalf of abolition, and to help Smith found the Liberty Party in 1840.

Elizabeth is also drawn into the reform fervor of the 1830's and finds in Stanton a man who is a decade older, and already making his mark as a public speaker and writer on causes she favors. Despite her father's uncertainties about Henry's future prospects, the two are married in 1840, agreeing that "obey your husband" be omitted in the vows.

Six weeks after the wedding they are in London attending the World Anti-Slavery Convention, a pivotal moment where she meets Lucretia Mott and witnesses first-hand the refusal to seat female delegates, which she recalls as...

*A burning indignation that filled my soul.*

Garrison remembers her as "a fearless woman...who goes for woman's rights with all her soul."

One signal of her commitment lies in what she calls her "debut in public" in a speech on temperance. She recounts this in an 1841 letter to her friend, Eliza Neall, saying that one hundred men were present and that the "homeopathic doses of Women's Rights" she infuses brought tears to the eyes of her audience and herself. She also concludes that...

*The more I think on the present condition of women, the more am I oppressed with the reality of her degradation. The laws of our country, how unjust are they! our customs, how vicious! What God has made sinful, both in man and woman, custom has made sinful in woman alone.*

From this speaking triumph also comes a life-long lesson:

*The best protection any woman can have ... is courage.*

Eight years will elapse between the 1840 London Convention on slavery and the landmark 1848 Seneca Falls gathering on women's rights. Much of that time for Elizabeth is spent in Boston, raising her seven children (one dies at birth), and mingling with activists, like Garrison and Fred Douglass, and intellectuals, like Emerson and the Alcotts.

While the Mexican War and sectional tensions over slavery dominate public discourse, a small cadre of protesters form up on behalf of "the women's issues." In 1845 the Transcendentalist Margaret Fuller publishes her treatise on *Women In The Nineteenth Century*, laying out a litany of basic rights denied and directing a scathing attack against men who exhibit a "tone of feeling toward females as toward slaves."

A smattering of men also lobby for change. Judge Elisha Hurlbut condemns "coverture" as "the law of the male sex gathering unto themselves dominion and power at the sacrifice of the female." Wendell Phillips and Garrison add their support. The Unitarian minister, Samuel May, goes so far as to tell his congregation that justice demands equality for women, including an astonishing plea for their right to vote.

Elizabeth's outward protests remain fairly muted so far. She refuses to be called "Mrs. Stanton," and adopts a new form of less formal dress favored by liberated women.

But in her few spare moments away from housekeeping she dashes off a series of essays on women's roles and rights that prove forerunners to the legally cast declarations she will offer at the Seneca Falls Convention of 1848, which will change her destiny.

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Date: 1840 Forward

### Lucy Stone Adds Her Indomitable Will On Behalf Of Gender Equality



Lucy Stone (1818-1893)

A third pioneer in the women's movement is Lucy Stone.

As a child she lives under the shadow of the words her mother tells her she used to report her birth to her father: "Oh dear, I am sorry it is a girl."

The time is 1818, and Francis Stone is hoping for another son to help work his farm in western Massachusetts, not a girl, unlikely to even offset her own consumption with the light labor she can provide. Throughout her youth, her father rules his domain with an iron hand, while her mother is left to comply on all things.

*There was only one will in our family, and that was my fathers.*

The effect of this on Lucy is to steel herself against repeating this subservience in her own life. This leads to her vows to become as educated as a man, to always earn and keep her own wages, and above all to avoid the surrender of her basic rights through marriage.

She is also upset as a youth by events outside her own home. She hears that Congress refuses to accept anti-slavery petitions written by women. Ministers in her own Congregational Church condemn the abolitionist Sarah Grimke for "assuming the place of a man" by speaking out in public. She learns that a Connecticut anti-slavery meeting refuses to count the vote of the firebrand Abby Kelley, who proceeds to defiantly raise her hand anyway.

Her early education in a local school is limited, but still sufficient to land her a position in teaching at the age of sixteen. When she enquires about her wages, she is told that "women can afford to teach for one half, or even less, the salary which men would ask."

In 1838, Lucy reads newspaper excerpts of Sarah Grimke's *Letters On The Equality Of The Sexes*, aimed at demolishing biblical justifications for subjugating women and forcing them to operate in different spheres from men.

In 1839, her thirst for education finds her enrolling at Mount Holyoke, only to discover that open support for abolition and women's rights is frowned upon by school officials. She transfers to Quaboag Seminary, especially to learn enough Latin and Greek to pass college entrance exams. In 1843 she has accumulated

enough savings to apply to Oberlin College, which nine years earlier becomes the first university accepting women.

Lucy thrives at Oberlin, mastering its classical curriculum. She works part-time to pay her way, and convinces the administration to adjust her wages upward to equal her male counterparts. She protests faculty resistance to a visiting lecture by abolitionist Kelley, and sets up a clandestine female debating society, where she hones her own speaking skills. In 1847 she graduates with honors, but refuses to write a commencement address after learning that it must be read by a man.

Her Oberlin phase also leads to a lasting friendship with Antoinette Brown, later the first woman ordained to the ministry by the Congregational Church. The two are sisters-in-law six years later, after Lucy changes her mind and decides to marry Henry Blackwell. He is an Englishman by birth, who immigrates to America, becomes a successful hardware salesman, and falls in love with Lucy after hearing one of her lectures. The marriage is preceded by an extensive pre-nuptial agreement, vacating all of the “coverture” rules abhorrent to Lucy since her youth.

In 1848, Abby Kelley convinces her to become a Lecturing Agent for the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society, which fully connects her to Lloyd Garrison’s supporters, including Lucretia Mott.

Lucy is now right where she belongs. Standing in front of a mixed and often openly hostile crowd. Sporting a short, almost masculine haircut and wearing a loose fitting jacket over “bloomer” trousers. Vigorously making the case for the cause of equality for women.

Over the coming decade her prowess and fearlessness as a public speaker will make her famous nationwide.

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### Sidebar: Oberlin College



Tappan Hall On The Campus Of Oberlin College

Lucy Stone’s Oberlin College begins in 1833 within the context of yet another of the era’s “utopian communities,” this one imagined by two young religious zealots seeking “moral perfection.”

One is Reverend John Shipherd, influenced by revivalist preacher, Charles Finney, and conducting his own evangelical meetings in 1832 in Elmyra, Ohio. The other is his friend from prep school, Philo

Stewart, serving as a missionary to the Choctaw tribes in the area. Both are troubled by the lack of religious dedication in the west, and decide to found a colony, whose “sole mission is to save souls and prepare the world for the coming millennium of Christ.”

With support from their Congregational church back east, they acquire 550 acres of land some thirty miles southeast of Cleveland, and christen their colony Oberlin, after a French educator they admire.

As with other utopian experiments, Oberlin suffers severe financial difficulties, until one of Shipherd's fundraising trips connects him with the philanthropist Lewis Tappan -- who has just learned that attempts to promote abolition at Lane Theological Seminary have run afoul of its conservative head, Lyman Beecher. This results in a walk-out from Lane of about 50 students and trustee, Asa Mahan.

Shipherd now works out a quid pro quo, whereby Tappan will donate \$10,000 and 8 professorships to Oberlin if the local college there guarantees that students do manual labor to pay operating expenses, and will agree to enroll both women and blacks, in addition to men.

Shipherd willingly accepts the deal on his own, and, in 1833, the Oberlin Collegiate Institute opens its doors, with Asa Mahan as its first president and a class largely composed of the Lane defectors.

By 1835, however, the community Trustees have still not lived up to the deal with Tappan. Their resistance demonstrates the disparagement toward females and blacks that prevails at the time -- even among this supposedly idealistic white enclave.

While admitting women has been approved, it comes with the caveat that their curriculum be confined to two departments -- "Female" and "Teachers" -- and not "Collegiate" and "Theological."

Enrolling blacks is another matter entirely, and the responses here are symbolic of the intense racial bias that dominates America's white society, South and North. Opponents argue that enrolling blacks at Oberlin would be madness, that internal church funding would disappear, and that...

*Hundreds of Negroes would be flooding in...and as soon as the darkies begin to come, the whites will begin to leave...and we will become a Negro school.*

At first, Shipherd tries to counter with moral persuasion, while tempering his plea with assurances that hands-off distance can still be maintained between whites and the inferior blacks.

*None of you will be compelled to receive them into your families, unless, like Christ, the love of your neighbor compels you to...as Christ ate with publicans and sinners... But this should be passed because it is a right principle and God will bless us in doing right...If we refuse to deliver our black brethren... I cannot hope that God will smile upon us.*

This too fails, and the Trustees opposition is strengthened by a student vote of 32-26 vote against admitting blacks. All that's left for Shipherd is threat, and on February 9, 1835, he tells the Trustees that the school will not only lose Tappan's crucial financial support, but that he will also leave the community unless they go along. By a margin of one last vote, cast by the abolitionist minister, John Keep, the motion to admit blacks carries.

From that moment on, Oberlin College will become a beacon of light shining across America on behalf of educating females and blacks -- even though actual progress proceeds in fits and starts.

Five years will pass before sixteen year old George Vashon becomes the first black enrolled. He is the son of Pennsylvania abolitionist, John Vashon, and goes on to graduate with honors in 1844, followed by a distinguished career as a lawyer, professor and reformer.

Progress happens faster for the Oberlin women. The curriculum for females is expanded to include the full range of “Collegiate” courses, with three women signing up for these in 1837, and two going on to be first in the nation to receive an AB degree, in 1841. Twenty-one years later, one Mary Patterson will be the first black woman awarded that degree, also from Oberlin.

Lucy Stone will enroll at Oberlin in 1843 and graduate in 1847. Her experiences there will reinforce many of the prejudices against women that are the norm in her day, including wage inequities and efforts to stifle her voice at campus debates and commencement. But, her time at Oberlin also proves transformative, as she begins her leadership in the Women’s Rights Movement. As she later observes:

*Whatever the reason, the idea was born that women could and should be educated. It lifted a mountain load from woman. It shattered the idea, everywhere pervasive as the atmosphere, that women were incapable of education, and would be less womanly, less desirable in every way, if they had it.*

And what of Shipherd and Stewart, the two men who fought so hard to create a utopian community and college in 1832 in the backwoods of Ohio? Sadly, Shipherd dies of malaria at age forty-two in Michigan, in the process of founding Olivet University, his “next Oberlin” in the west. Stewart lives on to seventy and continues to help fund Oberlin through profits from a patented stove he invents.

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Date: 1840 Forward

### **Susan B. Anthony Brings Her Unique Organizational Talents To The Cause**



Susan B. Anthony (1820-1906)

The fourth member of the early women’s movement is Susan Brownell Anthony.

She is born in 1820, which makes her five years younger than Elizabeth Cady Stanton and two years younger than Lucy Stone.

Her early life is spent on a modest farm situated in the far northwestern edge of Massachusetts. To supplement the family income, her father Daniel operates a small cotton mill, which employs local women, several of whom are housed on the farm. This exposes Susan from an early age to the hard labor demands placed on women, in their households and in factories.

Daniel is a “Hicksite Quaker,” like Lucretia Mott, who relies on his “inner light” rather than church authority to shape his beliefs. He is not only a freethinker but also a reformer, dedicated especially to temperance, abolition and equal education for women.

In 1826, Daniel and a wealthy friend form a partnership to operate a much larger cotton mill, and the family moves some forty miles north to a new home in Battenville, New York. Once settled in, he constructs a one room schoolhouse on his new property, and hires a teacher, Mary Perkins, to instruct his own children and those of his mill workers. Susan is an eager student and is ever ready to expand her educational horizons.

At age seventeen a chance arises and she is off to Deborah Moulson's Female Seminary, a Quaker boarding school in Philadelphia. The curriculum is ideal – math, science, literature, physiology – but she finds the environment stifling, with Moulson an overbearing religious zealot, perpetually criticizing her work along with her sunny disposition.

This bittersweet academic interlude ends abruptly when the aftershocks of Andrew Jackson's Bank Panic of 1835 crush her father's business and leave the entire family in poverty.

In 1838, she returns home, determined to help pay off the family debts.

To do so, she begins teaching in 1840 at Eunice Kenyon's Friends Seminary in New Rochelle, New York. While there, she becomes increasingly self-confident and brushes off several marriage proposals, to protect her independence. Her anti-slavery instincts are heightened in New Rochelle by the systematic humiliations she sees free blacks suffering at the hands of "supposedly Christian" whites. She also learns to her dismay that the wage she is being paid at the Seminary is only one-fourth of her male counterparts.

In 1845 she is back home again in a Quaker community near Rochester, on a farm which becomes a gathering place for activists, including the famous Unitarian minister, Samuel May, preaching in nearby Syracuse, and, over time, Frederick Douglass, who will become Susan's lifelong friend. Three "causes" are bubbling up for her – temperance, abolition, and the career and wage constraints placed on women by traditional social norms.

A year later, in 1846, she ventures out again on her own. This time for a position her uncle arranges as headmistress of the "Female" Department at Canajoharie Academy – where she teaches for three years and earns a reputation for intelligence and drive. While there, she joins the Daughters of Temperance, and also begins to break away from some of her strict Quaker heritage, evident in a more colorful choice of dresses and involvement with theater and dance.

The landmark Seneca Falls Convention on women's rights takes place on July 19-20, 1848, while she is still living and teaching at Canajoharie. But both of her parents and her younger sister, Mary, attend the Rochester Women's Rights Convention which follows on August 2, and sign the Declaration of Sentiments document, which defines the movement.

Susan returns to Rochester in 1849 when Canajoharie closes, and takes on responsibility for overseeing her parent's farm, while her father sets up a new insurance business. But she is soon drawn into applying the skills she has acquired on behalf of her causes – and, like Lucy Stone, goes forth as a traveling lecturer.

It is not until May 1851 that Amelia Bloomer introduces Anthony to Elizabeth Cady Stanton at a Lloyd Garrison event in Seneca Falls. This begins a partnership that defines the Women's Rights Movement over the next fifty years. The two are perfect complements – Stanton, the theoretician, Anthony, the get-it-done practitioner. It is Anthony who sums this up in an 1902 eulogy for her friend:

*She forged the thunderbolts and I fired them.*

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### Sidebar: The "Look" Of The Liberated Woman



Dr. Mary Walker Wearing Trousers!

While the women's movement enjoys near unanimity on its messages, settling on the "proper look" for its messengers stirs lots of controversy.

In one camp are those who insist that a change in appearance is required to signal a change in station. This leads them toward shorter haircuts and loose fitting trousers worn under waist or knee-length jackets, and away from the traditional whalebone corsets and hoop skirts -- some weighing up to twelve pounds -- most have worn since their teens.

Others feel that these changes will open them up to mockery "for trying to look like men" -- and that this in turn will detract attention from the arguments they wish to make.

The leading early proponent of the new look is Amelia Bloomer, a Seneca Falls journalist and advocate for female rights. She claims that women, not men, should determine the dress they prefer, and that the choice should be driven by what they find comfortable and healthy.

*The costume of women should be suited to her wants and necessities. It should conduce at once to her health, comfort, and usefulness; and, while it should not fail also to conduce to her personal adornment, it should make that end of secondary importance.*

Be they straight legged or puffed out in a Turkish design, the trousers are christened "bloomers" in honor of their sponsor – and the entire ensemble becomes "the Bloomer Costume."

The visual impact of the new look is dramatic. Gone is the static, ornamental, predictable impression of the hoop skirts; on comes a much heightened sense of motion, energy and substance. Women dressing for action, rather than women dressing for men.

The stage actress, Fanny Kemble, an abolitionist once married to the scurrilous slave owner, Pierce Meese Butler, causes an early stir by donning the "Turkish dress" at public events. Proponents of physical fitness for women discard their corsets. A group calling themselves the "Lowell Bloomer Institute" declare their intent to abandon...

*The whimsical and dictatorial French goddess Fashion (in favor of) the demands and proffers of Nature.*

The feminist Elizabeth Smith Miller introduces the new look to her cousin, Stanton, who appreciates the freedom of movement it provides, and begins to debut it at her lectures.

Another Stanton cousin, Gerritt Smith supports a Dress Reform Association along with Amelia Bloomer's efforts to promote the new designs to a mass market.

But, of course, the nay-sayers latch unto "the bloomer look" as one more reason to ridicule the radical women.

The accusations range from tasteless and unladylike to impersonating men and encouraging promiscuity. A variety of "Bloomer Polkas" add fodder to the put-downs.

In the end, most of the reformers, including Stanton, decide to reverse course. Paulina Wright Davis sums up the entire fashion matter as follows:

*If I put on this dress, it would cripple my movements in regard to our work at this time, and crucify me ere my hour had come.*