



Foundation Document

Women's Rights National Historical Park

New York



Contact Information

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Purpose



The Wesleyan Chapel, site of the First Women's Rights Convention (Seneca Falls).

Women's Rights National Historical Park preserves and interprets for the education, inspiration, and benefit of present and future generations, the nationally significant historic and cultural sites, structures, and events in Seneca Falls and Waterloo, New York, associated with the struggle for equal rights for women, and cooperates with national, state, and local entities to preserve the character and historic setting of such sites, structures, and events.

Women's Rights National Historical Park administers the Votes for Women History Trail route in partnership with participating properties, other federal agencies, and state and local governments, setting standards and coordinating management of and planning for the trail.

Significance

Significance statements express why Women's Rights National Historical Park resources and values are important enough to merit national park unit designation. Statements of significance describe why an area is important within a global, national, regional, and systemwide context. These statements are linked to the purpose of the park unit, and are supported by data, research, and consensus. Significance statements describe the distinctive nature of the park and inform management decisions, focusing efforts on preserving and protecting the most important resources and values of the park unit.

The following significance statements have been identified for Women's Rights National Historical Park. (Please note that the sequence of the statements do not reflect the level of significance.)

The formal struggle for equal rights for women was ignited by the people and events connected with the first Women's Rights Convention held in Seneca Falls in July 1848. This effort is one of the most critical and influential social movements in world history, rooted in other reform movements of the period and continuing today.

The Declaration of Sentiments, unanimously adopted at the 1848 convention, is a document of enduring relevance, which asserted that equality and justice should be extended to all people without regard to sex.



The M'Clintock House parlor showing a replica of the table where the Declaration of Sentiments was drafted.



First class postage from 1948 commemorating the First Women's Rights Convention.



Fundamental Resources and Values

Fundamental resources and values (FRVs) are those features, systems, processes, experiences, stories, scenes, sounds, smells, or other attributes determined to warrant primary consideration during planning and management processes because they are essential to achieving the purpose of the park and maintaining its significance. Fundamental resources and values are closely related to a park's legislative purpose and are more specific than significance statements.

Fundamental resources and values help focus planning and management efforts on what is truly significant about the park. One of the most important responsibilities of NPS managers is to ensure the conservation and public enjoyment of those qualities that are essential (fundamental) to achieving the purpose of the park and maintaining its significance. If fundamental resources and values are allowed to deteriorate, the park purpose and/or significance could be jeopardized.

The following fundamental resources and values have been identified for Women's Rights National Historical Park:

- Wesleyan Methodist Chapel Site, 126 Fall Street, Seneca Falls
- Elizabeth Cady Stanton House and Grounds, 32 Washington Street, Seneca Falls
- M'Clintock House and Grounds, 14 East Williams Street, Waterloo
- Hunt House and Grounds, 401 East Main Street (Routes 5/20), Waterloo
- Women's Rights National Historical Park Collections and Archives



Songbook and Pearlware from the Stanton House.

Women's Rights National Historical Park may contain other resources and values that may not be fundamental to the purpose and significance of the park, but are important to consider in management and planning decisions. These are referred to as other important resources and values.

The following other important resources and values have been identified for Women's Rights National Historical Park:

- Women's Rights National Historical Park Visitor Center, 136 Fall Street, Seneca Falls
- Declaration Park, Seneca Falls
- Young House, 12 East Williams Street, Waterloo
- Chamberlain House, 1 Seneca Street, Seneca Falls
- Women's Rights National Historical Park Archeological Resources

Related resources and values are those resources that are outside the park's legislated boundary or legislative scope of the park yet have interpretive or contextual value that is significant to and supportive of the park's fundamental resources and values.

Related resources and values associated with Women's Rights National Historical Park include:

- Seneca Falls Village Historic District
- Historic Area, Waterloo
- Elements of Votes for Women History Trail Route
- Cayuga-Seneca Canal
- Seneca Knitting Mills, Seneca Falls
- Homes of Signers of the Declaration of Sentiments (1848)

Interpretive Themes

Interpretive themes are often described as the key stories or concepts that visitors should understand after visiting a park—they define the most important ideas or concepts communicated to visitors about a park unit. Themes are derived from—and should reflect—park purpose, significance, resources, and values. The set of interpretive themes is complete when it provides the structure necessary for park staff to develop opportunities for visitors to explore and relate to all of the park significances and fundamental resources and values.

The following interpretive themes have been identified for Women's Rights National Historical Park:

- Central New York was a geographic nexus for 19th century grassroots reform movements including women's rights, abolition, temperance, and labor; movements that led to national and global societal changes affecting women's and men's roles in politics, education, work, religion, and the home.

- The Declaration of Sentiments was ratified at the first Women's Rights Convention held in 1848 in Seneca Falls, New York, and marked the formal beginning and validation of the women's rights movement in the United States.
- The personal passion and dynamic relationships among American mid-19th century reformers led to the first Women's Rights Convention in history and inspired others to take action to secure rights for women.
- Rooted in both the example and the course set by 19th century reformers in Seneca Falls, New York, the women's movement evolves and inspires passion and commitment from succeeding generations who continue to fight for the rights of all people.



Elizabeth Cady Stanton and her daughter, Harriot, 1856. Photo: Library of Congress.

Description

Women's Rights National Historical Park was established by the U.S. Congress in December 1980. It was listed in the National Register of Historic Places on December 28, 1980. The Women's Rights National Historical Park District comprises four noncontiguous units that are thematically linked to the early 19th century Women's Rights Movement in the United States and to the first Women's Rights Convention, held in Seneca Falls, New York, in 1848. The four units are the Wesleyan Chapel and Declaration Park, the Elizabeth Cady Stanton House in Seneca Falls, and the M'Clintock House and the Hunt House located nearby in Waterloo, New York. The park's visitor center is located in Seneca Falls. The park boundary encompasses a total area of 7.44 acres. The park's maintenance facility, located on Water Street in Seneca Falls, is leased by the park and not owned.



The Seneca Falls home of Elizabeth Cady Stanton and her growing family from 1847 to 1862. During that time Stanton helped organize the first women's rights convention in 1848 and launched the reform movement for women's rights.

The nation's first Women's Rights Convention was the work of a small group of women who developed the idea and wrote the call for the convention at the Hunt House in Waterloo. At the M'Clintock House in Waterloo, members of the M'Clintock family met with Elizabeth Cady Stanton and drafted a Declaration of Sentiments that was signed by 100 delegates at the July 1848 convention. The Elizabeth Cady Stanton House, significant for its association with Stanton, who became a national leader of the Women's Rights Movement, was also a home base for 14 years after the convention, used for the continued development of the Women's Rights Movement. Strategically located in the center of the groundswell of religious and reform movements occurring in central New York in the first half of the 19th century, the villages of Seneca Falls and Waterloo became the birthplace of women's rights in the United States. During the 1830s and 1840s, the active role of women in anti-slavery and legal reform efforts (on the latter case, specifically with regard to married women's property rights) informed a growing concern for women's rights on a broader scale that are clearly reflected in the Declaration of Sentiments.

The Declaration of Sentiments and the signers names are written on a blue stone wall with water flowing over text in the summer.

