

The First Wave

Women's Rights
National Historical Park
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

The First Wave

The statues in the lobby of the Visitor Center represent the first wave of women's rights activists in the United States: more than 300 women and men organized and participated in the first Women's Rights Convention. The sculpture includes statues of twenty people: Mary Ann and Thomas M'Clintock, Lucretia and James Mott, Jane and Richard Hunt, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Frederick Douglass, Martha Wright, and eleven "anonymous" participants who represent the men and women who attended the Convention but did not sign the "Declaration of Sentiments."



The Convention

On July 19 and 20, 1848, more than 300 people attended the first Women's Rights Convention in the Wesleyan Methodist Chapel, Seneca Falls, New York. The guiding theme of the Convention presented in the "Declaration of Sentiments" declared that "all men and women are created equal." The document went on to demand equal rights for women in property and custody laws, educational opportunities, and participation in the church, professions, and politics.

This Convention was the beginning of a seventy-two year battle to gain the right for women to vote in the United States. Despite the active leadership of Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Lucretia Mott, and Martha Wright, many people still do not know who these women, or their male supporters, were. The bronze statues executed by Lloyd Lillie are the near-life-size rendition of the first wave of the women's rights activists.

The Organizers and the Men Who Supported Them

Elizabeth Cady Stanton spearheaded the call for the Convention and wrote the first draft of the "Declaration of Sentiments" out of a strong sense of injustice and righteous indignation at the plight of women. She later became one of the most important and persistent leaders of human rights in U.S. history.



Elizabeth Cady Stanton

Frederick Douglass, a former slave and prominent abolitionist lecturer, published the *North Star*, one of the few African-American antislavery newspapers in the United States. At the first Women's Rights Convention, he publicly seconded Elizabeth Cady Stanton's highly controversial motion for the right of women to vote.



Frederick Douglass



James and Lucretia Mott

James and Lucretia Mott were influential Quaker abolitionists and merchants from Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. The Motts refused to sell slave-made products, including cotton and sugar, in their store. Lucretia Mott was a respected Quaker minister. During the Convention, Lucretia presented a lecture and James chaired one of the sessions.



Thomas and Mary Ann M'Clintock

Thomas and Mary Ann M'Clintock, leaders in Quaker reform and abolition, moved to Waterloo in 1836. Mary Ann and Lucretia Mott wrote the Female Anti-Slavery Society's appeal in 1832. In response to the call for women's rights, the M'Clintocks hosted a meeting in their home where the "Declaration of Sentiments" was written for the first Women's Rights Convention.

Martha Wright participated in the Convention activities while pregnant with her seventh child. She later embarked on a distinguished career in human rights, presiding over several conventions and holding office in women's rights associations. She was Lucretia Mott's sister.



Martha Wright

Richard and Jane Hunt were Waterloo philanthropists who supported human rights causes. They hosted the tea party that led to the call for the first Women's Rights Convention in the United States.



Richard and Jane Hunt

The Artist

Lloyd Lillie, Professor Emeritus, Boston University, and two assistants sculpted the statues out of clay. Photographs and live models were used to create the movement, facial expressions, and size of the statues. In a foundry owned and operated by a woman, the figures were cast in bronze, an alloy of copper and tin. The weight process caused the statues to lose five percent of their size. The sculpture was commissioned by the National Park Service for Women's Rights National Historical Park Visitor Center, which opened in August, 1993. If you would like to view the eight-minute video *Portrait of a Sculpture*, documenting the making of the statues, please ask the ranger at the information desk.

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