

Seneca Falls emerged as a bustling mill and manufacturing community along the five natural falls of the Seneca River during the 1830's and 1840's. A rural farming area was transformed in just a few years to a center of milling and manufacturing. The change was revolutionary to women: for the first time women in the area could choose to work in a mill for paid wages, rather than work in the home.

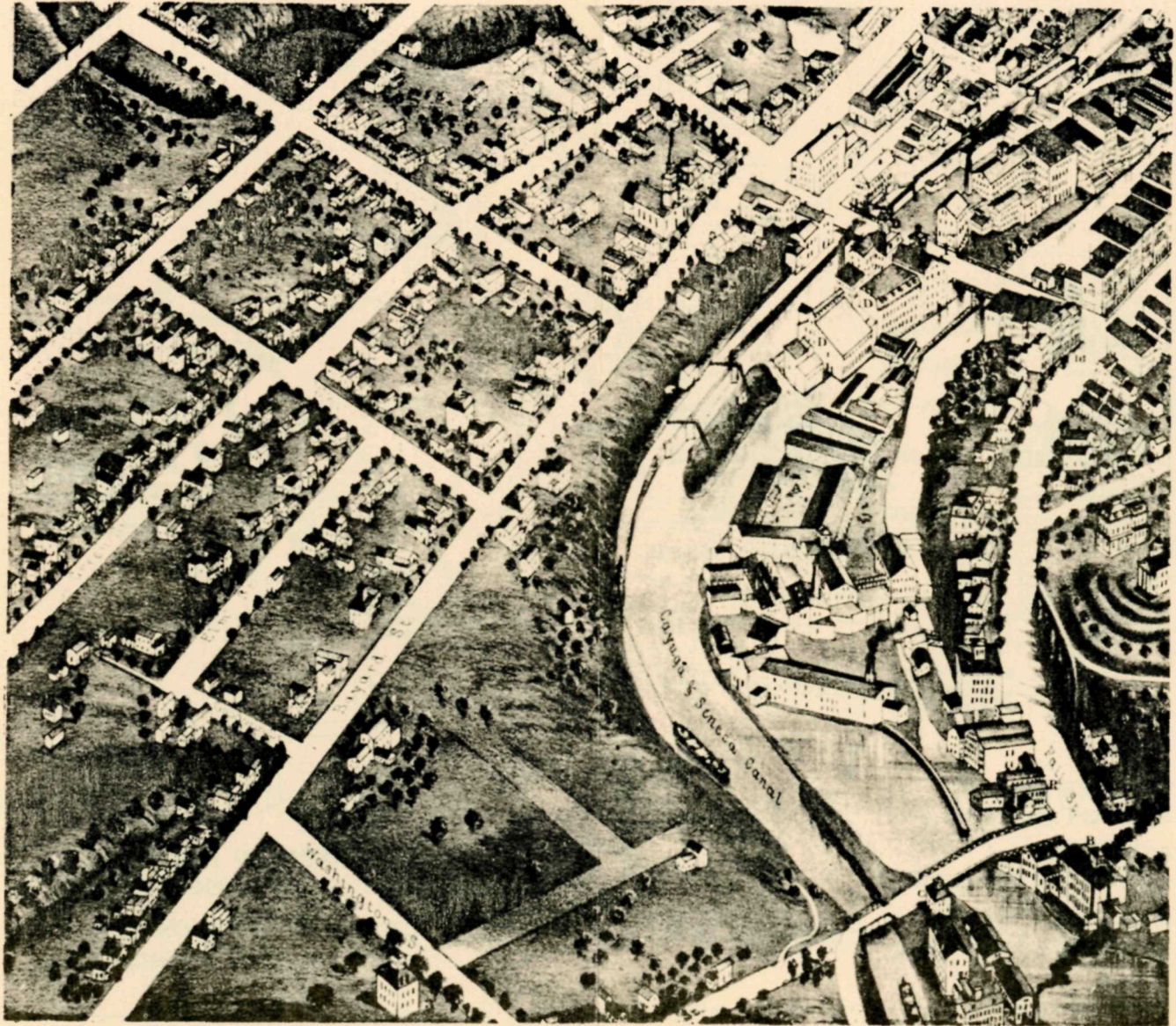
Major change was occurring around Seneca Falls as well. The abolition and temperance movements attracted and created many radicals and reformers. Several religious movements originated in the area, including Mormonism, Millerites, and a Utopian community in Oneida. The area around Seneca Falls was the major transportation passage for a several state area. The turnpike and the Erie Canal funneled through the region the radicals, reformers, dreamers, pioneers, and speculators – all moving on to the open west.

Elizabeth Cady Stanton moved to Seneca Falls from Boston in 1847 with her husband and three small children. Stanton was accustomed to an intellectually stimulating life in Boston. Moving to a small house, distant and isolated from the community center, caring for three children and a house without help, Stanton found her new life limiting and frustrating. Stanton had since early youth been concerned about women's lack of equality: they were not allowed to own property, they were not allowed to vote, they were not allowed to retain guardianship or other powers for their children. Stanton was frustrated and angered by some of the experiences of women in the Abolition Movement: they were at times not allowed to be delegates, or if delegates, to speak in public. These frustrations, plus the difficulties of life as a mother and wife, combined to create a resolve in Stanton that women should address their grievances.

Five reformers met on July 14, 1848, at the house of Jane Hunt in Waterloo, New York, adjacent to Seneca Falls. Stanton, Jane Hunt, Lucretia Mott, Mary Ann McClintock and Mary Wright discussed their dissatisfactions. They decided to hold a convention to publicize these issues. The women met the next day at the McClintock home in Waterloo and drafted the Declaration of Sentiments – a manifesto on women's rights.

On July 19 and 20, 1848, over 300 men and women came to the Convention in the Wesleyan Chapel in Seneca Falls. It

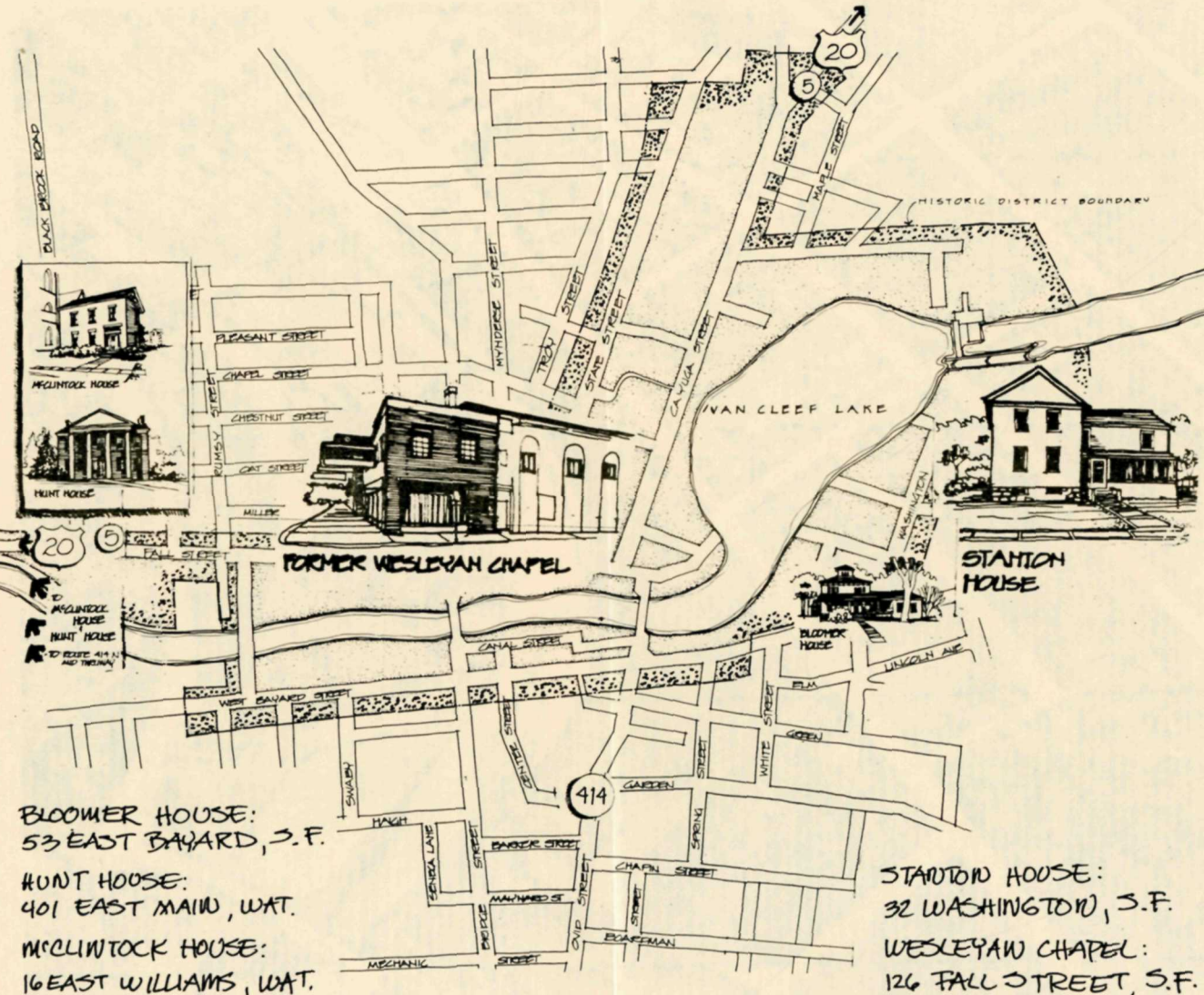
WOMEN'S RIGHTS NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK



Historical map courtesy of the Seneca Falls Historical Society

SENECA FALLS, NEW YORK

WOMEN'S RIGHTS NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK



was the first convention to discuss women's rights, and was the beginning of the women's rights movement still in progress in America today. Ratification of the Declaration was signed by 68 women and 32 men. Many had refused to approve a document so extreme as to ask for the right to vote for women.

The history of the women's rights movement and the history of its founders is the focus of the new Women's Rights National Historical Park. Legislation establishing the park was signed on December 28, 1980. The National Park Service is authorized to acquire and preserve the home of Elizabeth Cady Stanton and the site of the 1848 convention, the Wesleyan Chapel. The Park Service is also authorized to participate in preservation of the locally designated historic preservation district.

The park is in early stages of development. None of the properties are owned by the government. Please inquire locally regarding hours that the Stanton home may be open to the public. Plans are for the Stanton home and Wesleyan Chapel to be preserved and open to the public. The Wesleyan Chapel is now the Seneca Falls Laundromat at Fall and Mynderse Streets, in downtown Seneca Falls. The Stanton home is at 32 Washington Street. Amelia Bloomer's home is at 53 East Bayard Street. In Waterloo, the Hunt house is at 401 East Main Street, and the McClintock house is at 16 East Williams Street.

Further information is available at the Women's Hall of Fame, 76 Fall Street, open Monday to Friday 10-4, Saturday 12-4, and Sundays 12-4 in June, July and August.

The park is located 15 minutes off the New York Thruway, south on Route 414. Airports approximately an hour's drive away include Rochester, Syracuse, and Ithaca, New York.

All inquiries concerning the Women's Rights National Historical Park may be mailed to:

Park Coordinator,
Women's Rights National Historical Park
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Seneca Falls, NY 13148