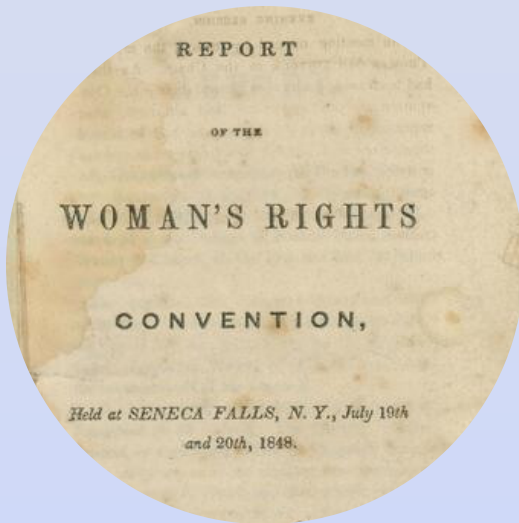


WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH

A Civics In Real Life Series

FEMALE FIRSTS

SENECA FALLS CONVENTION



"We are assembled to protest against a form of government, existing without the consent of the governed—to declare our right to be free as man is free, to be represented in the government which we are taxed to support, to have such disgraceful laws as give man the power to chastise and imprison his wife, to take the wages which she earns, the property which she inherits, and, in case of separation, the children of her love." These words were part of the [opening remarks](#) at the Seneca Falls Convention on July 19, 1848. This gathering would be the first women's rights convention in the United States and the beginning of a decades long suffrage movement. The idea to host a gathering for this purpose stemmed from the planning of [Elizabeth Cady Stanton](#) and [Lucretia Mott](#). Attempting to attend the 1840 World Anti-Slavery Convention in London, but excluded because of their sex, these two women vowed to host a convention of their own highlighting the issues surrounding women's rights. Women in early U.S. history had no identity separate from their male relatives including their husbands, fathers, and others. They couldn't own property, vote, obtain access to education, and were seen as inferior in the eyes of the law and religion. While [many women](#) were speaking out on these issues, the Seneca Falls Convention would be the first to take the movement national. Organized and run by Stanton, Mott, [and others](#), the convention was a two-day event. Held at the Wesleyan Chapel in Seneca Falls, New York it was surprisingly well attended despite being [minimally advertised](#). The first day of the event was for women only, with men allowed to join on the second day. The two days consisted of lectures, debates and voting on the manifesto the convention planned to publish. Drafted in advance by Stanton and the other organizers, the [Declaration of Sentiments](#) was modeled after the [Declaration of Independence](#), as the goal was to demand their constitutionally given right to equality. Utilizing the exact format and much of the same language, it consisted of the copied preamble, a list of grievances related to inequalities in many areas of society, and eleven resolutions, or demands. Ten of the resolutions passed unanimously with little debate, but the fiercest debate and resistance came regarding resolution nine, suffrage. Stanton added this resolution after the women finished drafting the document but before the convention began. It was an issue in 1848 that not all agreed upon, including Stanton and Mott. Although it would cost the convention some supporters, with persuasive speeches from Stanton and attendee [Frederick Douglass](#), resolution nine passed and their efforts would become the cornerstone in the fight for women's suffrage. Sixty-eight women signed the Declaration, and thirty-two men signed a separate document to express support. Beginning a tradition of annual women's rights conventions, stories of Seneca Falls ran in newspapers nationwide and words from the Declaration would be quoted frequently until the ratification of the [19th Amendment](#) and beyond. Despite only [one signer](#) living to see the dream of suffrage realized, the Seneca Falls Convention as a "female first" set in motion a [timeline](#) of women's rights activism that continues to this day.

Civics Challenge: Search & Learn

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| Notable Women's Rights Conventions in Your State: | |
| Date Your State Ratified the 19th Amendment: | |

Read More: [Lost History: The Declaration of Sentiments](#)



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