In early American history, women were placed in the domestic sphere with the duty of raising pious, religious, upstanding citizens who would further the cause of the new Republic. Often times, women were denied the pleasures associated with "self" and possessing one's own identity apart from the husband, family, and home. Women were denied a lot of rights that their husbands and other men enjoyed and sought to have the same "equal rights" afforded to them by the U.S. Constitution.

This exhibit featured the Seneca Falls Convention (July 19-20, 1848) -- the first convention in American history to discuss the social, civil, and religious condition and rights of woman. The convention held in Seneca Falls, NY, marked the beginning of equal rights for women in our country and became the springboard for the Women’s History movement in America. Featured women in the exhibit include: Susan B. Anthony, Lucretia Mott, and Elizabeth Cady Stanton. Important documents contributing to the convention (such as the Declaration of Sentiments) were featured as well as memorabilia and books by and about other leading feminists in American history, including Susan B. Anthony, the first woman ever to be featured on a U.S. coin.

Group members: Jess Holtry, Ryan Johnson, and Dan Reiter
The Women

**Elizabeth Cady Stanton:** Not only was Elizabeth Cady Stanton one of the organizers of the Seneca Falls Convention of 1848, she also wrote and signed the Declaration of Sentiments, modeled after the Declaration of Independence and aimed and throwing off the tyranny of patriarchy. With the support of her husband and children, Stanton argued that the “moral superiority” of women (which was one of the binding tenants of Republican Motherhood) should not be used to oppress women, but should, instead, allow them access to the public and political sphere as well as the domestic sphere. Although a graduate from Troy Female Seminary, Stanton also wrote a book decrying the role that religion had proclaimed appropriate for women. Stanton often toured New England, giving lectures on feminism and the cause for women’s rights.

**Susan B. Anthony:** Though not actually at the Seneca Falls Convention in 1848, Susan B. Anthony traveled to New York in the year that followed and became closely acquainted with Elizabeth Cady Stanton. Through her friendship with Stanton, and inspired by the Seneca Falls Convention, Susan B. Anthony began actively to work for the goal of women’s right and suffrage. Stanton’s great accomplishment for the cause of women’s rights was an attempt to vote in an election, years before women were given suffrage. Anthony was arrested, found guilty, and fined, although she never paid the fine. Anthony was also an ardent abolitionist in the years leading up to the Civil War.
Lucretia Mott: With the support of her husband, James Mott, Lucretia Mott was an activist for both women’s rights and abolition throughout most of her life. She held positions in various committees, even traveling abroad to spread her ideals. At the Seneca Falls Convention, over which Mott presided as leader, Mott was the first person to sign Elizabeth Cady Stanton’s Declaration of Sentiments.

In a true marriage relation, the independence of the husband and the wife is equal, their dependence mutual, and their obligations reciprocal.

1879.

Lucretia Mott.
The Declaration of Sentiments

"When, in the course of human events, it becomes necessary for one portion of the family of man to assume among the people of the earth a position different from that which they have hitherto occupied, but one to which the laws of nature and of nature’s God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes that impel them to such an absolution.

We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men and women are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness; that to secure these rights governments are instituted, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed. Whenever any form of government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the right of those who suffer from it to refuse allegiance to it, and to insist upon the institution of a new government, laying its foundation on such principles, and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to affect their safety and happiness.

Prudence, indeed, will dictate that governments long established should not be changed for light and transient causes; and, accordingly, all experience hath shown that mankind are more disposed to suffer, while evils are sufferable, than to right themselves by abolishing the forms to which they were accustomed. But when a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing invariably the same object, evinces a design despotism, it is their duty to throw off such government, and to provide new guards for their future security. Such has been the patient sufferance of the women under this government, and such is now the necessity which constrains them to demand the equal station to which they are entitled.

The history of mankind is a history of repeated injuries and usurpations on the part of man toward woman, having in direct object the establishment of an absolute tyranny over her. To prove this, let facts be submitted to a candid world.

- He has never permitted her to exercise her inalienable right to the elective franchise.
- He has compelled her to submit to laws, in the formation of which she had no voice.
- He has withheld from her rights which are given to the most ignorant and degraded men - both natives and foreigners.
- Having deprived her of this first right as a citizen, the elective franchise, thereby leaving her without representation in the halls of legislation, he has oppressed her on all sides.
- He has made her, if married, in the eye of the law, civilly dead.
- He has taken from her all right in property, even to the wages she earns.
- He has made her morally, an irresponsible being, as she can commit many crimes with impunity, provided they be done in the presence of her husband. In the covenant of marriage, she is compelled to promise obedience to her husband, he becoming, to all intents and purposes, her master - the law
giving him power to deprive her of her liberty, and to administer chastisement.

- He has so framed the laws of divorce, as to what shall be the proper causes of divorce, in case of separation, to whom the guardianship of the children shall be given; as to be wholly regardless of the happiness of the women - the law, in all cases, going upon a false supposition of the supremacy of a woman, and giving all power into his hands.
- After depriving her of all rights as a married woman, if single and the owner of property, he has taxed her to support a government which recognizes her only when her property can be made profitable to it.
- He has monopolized nearly all the profitable employments, and from those she is permitted to follow, she receives but a scantly remuneration.
- He closes against her all the avenues to wealth and distinction, which he considers most honorable to himself. As a teacher of theology, medicine, or law, she is not known.
- He has denied her the facilities for obtaining a thorough education - all colleges being closed against her.
- He allows her in church, as well as State, but a subordinate position, claiming apostolic authority for her exclusion from the ministry, and, with some exceptions, from any public participation in the affairs of the Church.
- He has created a false public sentiment by giving to the world a different code of morals for men and women, by which moral delinquencies which exclude women from society, are not only tolerated but deemed of little account in man.
- He has usurped the prerogative of Jehovah himself, claiming it as his right to assign for her a sphere of action, when that belongs to her conscience and her God.
- He has endeavored, in every way that he could to destroy her confidence in her own powers, to lessen her self-respect, and to make her willing to lead a dependent and abject life.

Now, in view of this entire disfranchisement of one-half the people of this country, their social and religious degradation, - in view of the unjust laws above mentioned, and because women do feel themselves aggrieved, oppressed, and fraudulently deprived of their most sacred rights, we insist that they have immediate admission to all the rights and privileges which belong to them as citizens of these United States.

In entering upon the great work before us, we anticipate no small amount of misconception, misrepresentation, and ridicule; but we shall use every instrumentality within our power to affect our object. We shall employ agents, circulate tracts, petition the State and national Legislatures, and endeavor to enlist the pulpit and the press in our behalf. We hope this Convention will be followed by a series of Conventions, embracing every part of the country.

Firmly relying upon the final triumph of the Right and the True, we do this day affix our signatures to this declaration.”
The Story of the Seneca Falls Convention
Seneca Falls, NY, 1848

• The idea for the convention was conceived by Lucretia Mott and Elizabeth Cady Stanton when the two were denied participation in a pro-abolition conference (abolition was a hot-button issue of the time about which both women were very passionate) simply because they were women.

• The convention was held 8 years later as a spur-of-the-moment event after the passing of the Married Women’s Property Rights Act in New York. This act allowed women to maintain some ownership of property they had previously held before marriage. Elizabeth Cady Stanton was an active proponent of this legislation.

• Elizabeth Cady Stanton first put forth the idea of arguing for women’s suffrage, an idea which was seen as radical, even by other organizers of the convention. This idea was soon undertaken as the main tenant of First Wave Feminism, a movement born at the Seneca Falls Convention.

• 300+ individuals were in attendance at the Seneca Falls Convention.
First Wave Feminism

- “Woman is the idol of man’s lust, the mere creature of his varying whims and will.” Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Seneca Falls Convention, 1848

- This movement fought to throw off the unjust laws of patriarchy that were used to oppress women, keeping them subordinate to men and out of the public sphere of influence. First Wave Feminism fought for change and equality.

- Ultimate goal was to gain for women the right to vote

- 1800’s and early 1900’s
Republican Motherhood

- "The hand that rocks the cradle rules the world."

- Women were placed in the domestic sphere with the duty of raising pious, religious, upstanding citizens who would further the cause of the new Republic. Often times, women were denied the pleasures associated with "self" and possessing one’s own identity apart from the husband, family, and home.

- "Angel in the House": Morality of women was superior to that of men, and ideally, for women, religion was seen as the "closet of the heart."

- Barbara Welter’s "True Woman" : Piety, Purity, Submissiveness, Domesticity

- Late 1700’s and early 1800’s
Seneca Falls Images

FIRST CONVENTION FOR WOMAN’S RIGHTS WAS HELD ON THIS CORNER 1849

Susan B. Anthony Dollar Coin
Resources

- Dr. Laurie JC Cella’s lectures in Women’s Literature (Fall 2008, Shippensburg University) on Republican Motherhood.

- [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/First_wave_feminism](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/First_wave_feminism)
- [http://www.history.rochester.edu/class/sba/first.htm](http://www.history.rochester.edu/class/sba/first.htm)
- [http://www.history.rochester.edu/class/sba/third.html](http://www.history.rochester.edu/class/sba/third.html)
- [http://www.history.rochester.edu/class/suffrage/stanton.html](http://www.history.rochester.edu/class/suffrage/stanton.html)
- [http://us.history.wisc.edu/hist102/bios/13.html](http://us.history.wisc.edu/hist102/bios/13.html)
- [http://www.mott.pomona.edu/mott1.htm](http://www.mott.pomona.edu/mott1.htm)
- [http://home.nps.gov/wori/historyculture/images/Postage_Stamp.jpg](http://home.nps.gov/wori/historyculture/images/Postage_Stamp.jpg)
- [http://www.ustrek.org/odyssey/semester1/111800/images/womenrights.jpg](http://www.ustrek.org/odyssey/semester1/111800/images/womenrights.jpg)
- [http://z.about.com/d/womenshistory/1/0/w/9/lucretia_mott.jpg](http://z.about.com/d/womenshistory/1/0/w/9/lucretia_mott.jpg)
- [http://www.npg.si.edu/col/seneca/senfalls1.htm](http://www.npg.si.edu/col/seneca/senfalls1.htm)
- [http://womenshistory.about.com/od/marriedwomensproperty/a/property_1848ny.htm](http://womenshistory.about.com/od/marriedwomensproperty/a/property_1848ny.htm)
- [http://www.loc.gov/exhibits/treasures/images/vc006196.jpg](http://www.loc.gov/exhibits/treasures/images/vc006196.jpg)
- [http://www.forensicgenealogy.info/images/susan_b_anthony_dollar.png](http://www.forensicgenealogy.info/images/susan_b_anthony_dollar.png)
- [http://www.usmint.gov/images/SBAnthony.jpg](http://www.usmint.gov/images/SBAnthony.jpg)
- [http://www.susanbanthonyhouse.org/dollar.shtml](http://www.susanbanthonyhouse.org/dollar.shtml)