

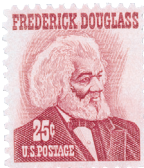
## This Day in History... July 19, 1848

### First Women's Rights Convention in the US

On July 19, 1848, the Women's Rights Convention, also known as the Seneca Falls Convention, opened in New York.

During colonial times, only property-owning adult males could vote. Most women could not vote, although some colonies made exceptions for property-owning widows. When the US Constitution was adopted in 1789, it didn't clearly define who could vote. Instead, states made that decision.

In the early 1800s, there were small movements and organizations that sought women's suffrage, but they were scattered and didn't work together. That all changed in 1848 when Lucretia Mott and Elizabeth Cady Stanton arranged the Women's Rights Convention in Seneca Falls, New York. The two had first met at the World's Anti-Slavery Convention, where they were both denied entrance because they were women.



*Douglass's speech helped encourage attendants to support the inclusion of women's suffrage in the Declaration of Sentiments.*

Held on July 19 and 20, 1848, the purpose for the Women's Rights Convention was to forever change the role of women. They wanted to be not just sheltered and silent wives and mothers, but productive and contributing members of society. This event pushed the movement forward with the creation of a "Declaration of Sentiments." The document was modeled after the United States Declaration of Independence and announced the intentions of women to fight for equal rights.

Elizabeth Cady Stanton wrote most of the declaration, and it was her idea to include the right to vote. At first, many at the convention did not want suffrage included in the document. They thought it was too radical a step and that it would discourage people from taking their cause seriously.

Frederick Douglass, one of the few men and only African American in attendance, stepped up and spoke in support of the idea. He even went so far as to say he wouldn't feel right about being able to vote if women couldn't also. Douglass claimed, "In this denial of the right to participate in government, not merely the degradation of women and the perpetuation of a great injustice happens, but the maiming and repudiation of one-half of the moral and intellectual power of the government of the world." His words truly inspired the attendees and ultimately persuaded them to keep the right to vote in the document.



*Issued for the 75th anniversary of the 19th Amendment.*

A women's suffrage amendment was first introduced in Congress in 1878, but it failed to pass. An amendment was then reintroduced in Congress for every session over the next 40 years. Then in May 1919, a new congressional term began. The bill was brought to the House as one of its first actions, which passed it by 42 votes. That June, the Senate passed it as well, after lengthy discussion. On August 18, 1920, Tennessee became the 36th state to ratify the 19th Amendment. The 19th Amendment was certified and adopted six days later, on August 26, officially giving women the right to vote.



*Issued on the 100th anniversary of the convention and pictures Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Carrie Catt, and Lucretia Mott.*



*Issued for the 50th anniversary of the 19th Amendment.*

Stanton also listed 18 grievances such as women's right to control their wages and property, and the difficulties in gaining custody after a divorce. She urged social and legal changes to improve women's place in society. Later that year, she would send out petitions pushing the New York State Legislature to pass the New York Married Women's Property Act.

When it came time to sign the Declaration of Sentiments, approximately 100 of the 300 people at the convention signed. Of these 100, over 30 were men. The Declaration of Sentiments later made its way to other women's rights conventions, acting as the spearhead for the campaign.



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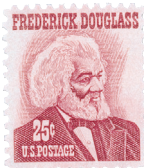
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