Women's Rights National Historic Park

YourGuides Tour Transcript

1. The Wesleyan Chapel
This is considered the birthplace of the women's rights movement. The first women's rights convention was held in America here in 1848. Three hundred people we estimate attended this first convention and it is considered the catalyst for the movement. It's not to see that women and men particularly women of color and women of lower socioeconomic status were not organizing discussing working on this movement.But this is really where you see the organization, the momentum for the movement beginning from this time.

2. Abbey Kelley and the Wesleyan Chapel
When she was here in 1843 she was known as Abby Kelly. She was a abolitionist a Quaker a follower of a follower of garrison and she helped set the stage for the first Women's Rights Convention. She arrives in Seneca Falls in our sister village in Waterloo in 1843 and she confronts the community specifically Christians over the topic of slavery and abolition."It is not good enough for you to have private beliefs against slavery. If you are not publicly working speaking against slavery you are complicit in this." And as a result these local people had to do some real moral inventory.How do they work? How does our religion fit into this? They start questioning their ministers and the churches about where do we stand on abolition and as a result many of the churches in this community broke apart over this topic as much as six thousand method is in the state of New York left their church over the topic of slavery. These local methodist break apart they form the Wesleyan Methodist Chapel. Richard Hunt one of our organizer's husband the wealthiest guy in town donates two hundred dollars to the building of this chapel. This was an interracial Chapel our congregation meaning both black and white congregants and trustees in a time that your church could be burned down even in the north for mixing these audiences together. So they had no hierarchy based on race or sex in the chapel. So what better place to have a woman's rights convention than the Wesleyan Methodist Chapel and the Wesley Methodist Chapel is really a fruition of of partly by Abbie Kelly coming here and setting the stage by having people question things like their institutions their traditions their values their leadership. So she kind of warms up the community so they wouldn't be open to something like a woman's rights convention and of course that building was a result of that.

3. First Women who started the Movement
Five women organized the first Women's Rights Convention. We have Elizabeth Cady Stanton who is probably the name that people most recognize today but I would characterize Elizabeth Cady Stanton in 1848 as a 32 year old well-connected housewife as in she's starting to just become a public figure. People are coming to this convention a lot of them to see Lucretia coffin Mott who's one of our organizers she's in town visiting her sister one of our other organizers Martha coffin right who lived right up the road in Auburn. So the five women: Jane Hunt, Marianne McClintock, Lucretia Coffin Mott, Martha Coffin Wright, and Elizabeth Cady Stanton convened for a tea party at Jane Hunt's house. And at that Tea Party Elizabeth expresses how deeply unsatisfied, unfulfilled depressed she was in her life at the moment and the women recognize it's not just Elizabeth who is suffering from the oppression and the limitations that

society forces upon women. And they decide this is the moment to strike. This is the time to have the convention they need to have it in nine days. They only give themselves nine days to plan it because the Lucretia Coffin Mott is the rock star of the abolitionist movement. She is going to make this convention legitimate. She's going to mentor the women. She needs to be here in town. So at that Tea Party is where they come up with the idea of the convention and start forming their ideas on how to organize it.

4. Who was Elizabeth Cady Stanton

Elizabeth Cady Stanton called her house the 'Center of the Rebellion' because what was going on there, radical things were going on. She starts writing the Declaration of Sentiments there you can think of that document like a declaration of independence for women. She is organizing she's having some of the greatest activists minds at her home to discuss how to make change. She's writing some speeches and other important publications that will help move the movement forward many people don't know that. Elizabeth Cady Stanton wrote the majority of Susan B Anthony speeches because she's the legal scholar she's a wordsmith and also she's got seven kids who's going to have to give the speeches. Susan B Anthony who chose to be single and chose not to have children. So Elizabeth did the writing of those speeches in that home Elizabeth said that she forged the Thunderbolts and Susan fired them. So of course the important work of women's rights occurred there but also that is where she raised her children. And of course that was a place where she did struggle. She had the push pull factors the work life balance that many of us face today on a even different level than we've experienced so at the same time she was raising seven children she was also a leader in an incredibly important movement and she said in her time at the at her home in Seneca Falls that she felt like a caged lioness pacing this force back and forth.

5. The McClintock Family

The McClintocks were a family of seven.Here at the park, we mostly focus on Thomas McClintock, Marianne McClintock, and their daughters Elizabeth McClintock and and Junior. Elizabeth McClintock was actually a very good friend of Elizabeth Cady Stanton. Elizabeth Cady Stanton would take her to the train here in Seneca Falls to the McClintock home in Waterloo and they would assist with assist her with the writing of the Declaration of Sentiments and as a result McClintock table is now in the Smithsonian. Also we believe their home as well as the hunt home to be stopped on the Underground Railroad. They were consistently hosting people saving people who were on their way to places like St. Catharines. They were members of a free produce society. They had a pharmacy with a girls school over it. And as members of the free produce society they would not sell anything associate with slave labor so they were incredibly principled and brave people.

6. Diversity of the Broader Movement
There is a great diversity of people within the movement with different motivation goals and in means of getting suffrage and rights for women. So it's not just one middle class group of women that all thought the same it's a great diversity of people within this movement. Sometimes those people were marginalized like we hear we we do know of course that African-American women were frequently marginalized along the way. One, it's not a monolith of a movement, and a great sacrifice occurred, and, three, it's a marathon not a sprint.

7. Igniting the ongoing struggle for Equality
So it took seventy two years from the writing of the Declaration of Independence to the writing of the Declaration of Sentiments in this convention. And then it took another 72 years from this moment here in Seneca Falls to 1920 the 19th Amendment universal suffrage that did not happen overnight. Elizabeth Cady Stanton has a very wonderful quote about essentially planting the seeds that will be harvested later so these women recognize this is a huge thing a huge societal change has to happen it very likely will not happen within our lifetime. So they were looking to the future they knew that yes we might not benefit from this but future generations of women and men will benefit from these things. So it began here. I wouldn't say it ended with the 19th Amendment or 1920. I would say it's a big milestone on the process towards true equity and equality in the United States.