

## Seneca Falls Convention: The Beginning of the Women's Rights Movement Or a "Conversation older than the Nation itself"<sup>508</sup>?

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In the study Historiography it is important to have a wealth of sources that not only demonstrate changes within the understanding of the event over time, but also give different perspectives. Attention must be paid not only to the methodologies that have been used to construct history, but also to the way different historians interpret different events. I have chosen to do an in-depth critical review on the Seneca Falls Convention. The traditional memory of this event in our minds goes as followed. The movement took place July 19-20, 1848, and was led by Elizabeth Cady Stanton and other prominent female activists--it was the first ever Women's Rights Convention. On the second Stanton read the Declaration of Sentiments, which demanded political equality for women. In the traditional understanding of the Seneca Fall Convention, it was the birthplace of the Women's Rights Movement and the first time women ever spoke out for political equality. Looking at the historiography there are contrasting arguments of three different groupings. The first is the traditional understanding of the Convention, viewing it as the birthplace of women seeking political rights of equality to men. The second identifies Seneca Falls as a watershed to women's suffrage but not the beginning; this means it was a pivotal moment that changed the course of the movement, but was not necessarily the start of it. The third and final view is that Seneca Falls is "perhaps the most enduring and long standing myth ever produced by a U.S social movement."<sup>509</sup> The oldest sources on this event belong in the first group and are written by Stanton and Susan B. Anthony.

If all of history is interpretation then what better place to start a study of the historiography of the Seneca Falls Convention than with the autobiography of the woman who dreamed it up? In Elizabeth Cady Stanton's book *Eighty Years and More: Reminiscences, 1815-1897* she recounts every aspect of her life. "She tries not only to describe how life was, but also to understand why it was that way for her."<sup>510</sup> In an audacious demonstration of her ambition and self-identity we see Stanton's accounts of key events and people within the women's rights movement. In her preface Stanton declares "The incidents of my public career as a leader in the most momentous reform yet launched upon the world-- the emancipation of woman"<sup>511</sup> It is not until chapter nine, aptly titled "The First Women's Rights Convention", Stanton discusses the dreaming and creation of the Convention. She credits the idea of the Women's Rights Convention to her appall over the treatment she and other women received at the World's Anti-slavery Convention. "I poured out, that day, the torrent of my long-accumulating discontent, with such vehemence and indignation that I stirred myself, as well as the rest of the party, to do and dare anything."<sup>512</sup>

This book is a micro-history with macro-historical events. While the first eight chapters focus on Stanton's personal life only after the convention it takes a shift to other prominent

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<sup>508</sup> Lori D. Ginzberg *Untidy Origins a story of Woman's Rights in Antebellum New York* Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005, 27.

<sup>509</sup>Lisa Tetrault. *The Myth of Seneca Falls Memory and the Women's Suffrage Movement, 1848-1849*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2014, 4.

<sup>510</sup> Elizabeth Cady Stanton. *Eighty Years and More: Reminiscences, 1815-1897*. Amherst, N.Y: Humanity Books, 2002, xi.

<sup>511</sup> Ibid., preface.

<sup>512</sup> Ibid.,148.

women's rights activists and women working for political rights in our country and abroad. She even attempts to tackle women and theology. There is no doubt that this rendition of the Seneca Falls Convention, and women's suffrage to follow, is a memory history. It is painted by Stanton's own opinions and is essentially a political interpretation to further the aims of the Women's Movement. Though Stanton confesses she had no idea how successful the endeavor would be or what would follow in its wake she firmly stands by it being important not only as the first convention for Women's Rights but for attracting "the attention of one destined to take a most important part in the new movement" according to Susan B. Anthony".<sup>513</sup> In a combined effort to draw attention to the Women's Right Movement Stanton and Anthony created the *History of Woman's Suffrage*.

The first volume of *History of Woman's Suffrage* was printed in 1881. It begins with "the prolonged slavery of woman is the darkest page of human history."<sup>514</sup> Already we get an idea that these women are attempting to create a foundation on which to rally others to their cause. By creating this perception of subjugation they make their cause seem morally right. On page sixty-eight the stage is finally set for the convention. The idea of Seneca Falls is described as a long spoken dream of Stanton and Mott. Their creation of the Declaration of Rights is viewed as "herculean labors."<sup>515</sup> Essentially the fact they accomplished the Convention was a feat of mythological proportions and should be herald as such. The book cites many men who positively supported the Convention and cites the surprise of the women that certain newspapers condemned them. Regardless, *History of Woman Suffrage* notes, "the brave protests sent out from this Convention touched a responsive chord in the hearts of women all over the country."<sup>516</sup> Thus the idea of Seneca Falls as the foundation of the Women's Rights Movement is truly born.

The last source in my first grouping is more recent. Sally G. McMillen wrote *Seneca Falls and the Origins of the Women's Rights Movement* in 2008. She claims in this book that: "before Seneca Falls, no one could imagine that anyone would dare challenge, in such an organized manner, women's subservience or their legal, social, and political oppression."<sup>517</sup> The book is a cultural history as it focuses on Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Lucretia Coffin Mott, Lucy Stone, and Susan B. Anthony leading up to Seneca Falls. There is also discussion on political and abolitionist causes that feed into the broader theme of the Seneca Falls Convention being the end all, be all. McMillen strongly makes the statement that "it was the Seneca Falls Convention that truly changed history."<sup>518</sup> Though she does admit that all the key female figures would later reflect on the Seneca Falls Convention differently. Regardless, McMillen holds strongly to the traditional tale of how the conception of the Convention first came about. She recognizes that the Declaration of Rights and Sentiments "elevated white women above male immigrants, free blacks, and the destitute who lacked the advantages many middle-class women possessed."<sup>519</sup> This demonstrates a type of hypocrisy from the women who demanded equality. McMillen continues with chapter four titled "The Women's Movement begins, 1850-1860" explaining that "the first decade after Seneca Falls

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<sup>513</sup> Stanton, *Eighty Years and More*, 155

<sup>514</sup> Stanton, Elizabeth Cady, Susan B. Anthony, Matilda Joslyn Gage, and Ida Husted Harper. *History of Woman Suffrage ... V. 1 V. 1*. New York: Fowler & Wells, 1889, 18.

<sup>515</sup> *Ibid.*, 68.

<sup>516</sup> *Ibid.*, 74.

<sup>517</sup> Sally G McMillen. *Seneca Falls and the Origins of the Women's Rights Movement*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2008, 3-4.

<sup>518</sup> *Ibid.*, 81.

<sup>519</sup> *Ibid.*, 91.

was crucial to the future success of the movement.”<sup>520</sup> This statement fostered the idea that now that the first convention had taken place at Seneca Falls, women could finally fight for equality and thus without it would not have entered into such a crucial time.

This book clearly denotes the Seneca Falls Convention as the real place that began the Women’s Rights Movement. McMillen, however, makes the statement that: “The few actual details we have of this two-day meeting pale in comparison to what it soon came to represent—and what it represents today.”<sup>521</sup> In this, McMillen conveys what is already expected of memory history, it can be construed, manipulated, and defined based on the needs of those who use it to their advantage. Furthermore, memory history is colored by the perceptions of the mindset of the people of that time. Ideas and statements that appear ludicrous to present day historians would seem perfectly understandable in the time period they are studying. In later sources we will see that this was not the first time a discussion like this did take place.

As McMillen produced a book that uses the traditional interpretation of the Seneca Falls Convention, I felt it best to see what other historians had to say of her analysis of Seneca Falls. The first review I chose to look at was done by Alison M. Parker in September 2008. Her first complaint in the review is that while concentrating on prominent women who were invested in the Women’s Rights Movement helped to create an “excellent overview of nineteenth-century American women’s history”<sup>522</sup> where McMillen fails is that she just writes of the white middle class woman’s perspective of the suffrage movement. Though McMillen does give credit to abolitionist work as something that helped to develop the Women’s Rights Movement, I have to agree with Parker that it would have been interesting in the chapters following the Seneca Falls Convention to look at what African American women were doing for their own suffrage.

Parker brings up another issue: “Women’s demands for equality were more radical than any other at the time, McMillen claims, including world peace and antislavery”<sup>523</sup> To make such a statement demonstrates that McMillen “Neglects to discuss the fact that this was also a period of some of the worst racism in American History”<sup>524</sup> and therefore does not give a truly all-encompassing picture of the historiography of the time and how the drive to political equality before the African American man shaped the Women’s Rights Movement post Seneca. Parker makes it clear that Seneca Falls was not the first discussion of Women’s Rights but stands firmly with the belief that it was the “formal beginning to the Women’s Rights Movement.”<sup>525</sup> Therefore, Parker falls somewhere between the first and second groupings.

The second review of *Seneca Falls and the Origins of the Women's Rights Movement* was conducted by Catherine Allgor who recognized that “In spite of the occasional impressive insight, there is not much new here for specialists.”<sup>526</sup> Though Allgor does commend the book as something useful for students she makes it clear that the traditional telling of the Seneca Falls Convention is not the take away for them. Allgor comments that “the real contribution of the work lies in the last three chapters that take the narrative from the Convention through the Civil War

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<sup>520</sup> McMillen. *Seneca Falls and the Origins of the Women's Rights Movement*, 104.

<sup>521</sup> *Ibid.*, 102.

<sup>522</sup> Alison M Parker. "Seneca Falls and the Origins of the Woman's Rights Movement." *Reviews in American History* 36, no. 3 (September 2008): 341. *America: History & Life*, EBSCOhost (accessed December 3, 2014), 341.

<sup>523</sup> *Ibid.*, 342.

<sup>524</sup> *Ibid.*, 348.

<sup>525</sup> *Ibid.*, 344.

<sup>526</sup> Catherine Allgor. "Seneca Falls and the Origins of the Women's Rights Movement." *American Historical Review* 113, no. 5 (December 2008): 1533-1534. *Humanities International Complete*, EBSCOhost (accessed November 10, 2014), 1534.

and the separation and then reunification of the two major suffrage organizations.”<sup>527</sup> This is an exceptional insight as many historians know of Seneca Falls, but there is very little attention paid to the different suffrage organizations and then later their unification. His conveys that Allgor believes Seneca Falls to be an important moment within the Women’s Rights Movement but not the most important aspect to it. Allgor even suggests that McMillen “knows that she could not conclude or even climax a book with the triumphant moment of Cady Stanton declaring independence.”<sup>528</sup> Allgor, as a result, appears to fall into the second grouping and uses feminist theory to analyze McMillen’s interpretation of Seneca Falls and what takes place following it. The interpretation that the Seneca Falls Convention was a turning point in Women’s History and suffrage, but not the beginning.

Dr. Theresia Sauter-Bailliet wrote ““Remember the Ladies”: Emancipation Efforts of American Women from Independence to Seneca Falls” and presented it at the 1986 conference of the European Association for American Studies. The article discusses Abigail Adams and even though she did not secure rights for women through her husband and his associates there is a strong case that Adams created the foundation for the Seneca Falls Convention. Sauter-Bailliet regards this as a milestone in the female suffrage and Women’s Rights Movement. “The grievances of Abigail Adams and other contemporaries of hers were taken up by the Seneca Falls women and gained momentum as a social movement”<sup>529</sup> Using Abigail Adam’s letter to her husband as proof, Sauter-Bailliet infers “in a sense, we can say, there has been a women’s movement ever since the subjugation of the female sex.”<sup>530</sup> She claims that throughout history women’s voices have been quieted and the collective memory of history has simply chosen to forget them. This ties in the idea that Seneca Falls is a memory history that the Women’s Rights Movement had been using as a launching point. As we saw in our first two sources, this is all thanks to Stanton’s tireless work to keep Seneca Falls in the forefront of feminist and history’s mind. Sauter-Bailliet believes the importance of her work is to show that “women have always been present, in thought and action, in revolutionary times.”<sup>531</sup> Thus, supporting the argument that Seneca Falls was a watershed to women’s suffrage but not the beginning.

When people think of the beginning of the Women’s Rights movement and the emergence of women fighting for political rights they picture Elizabeth Cady Stanton or Susan B. Anthony. Anne M. Boylan explains in her article “Women and Politics in the Era before Seneca Falls,” that “it would be misleading, however, to assume that the provocative actions of abolitionists and moral reformers represented American women’s first foray into politics.”<sup>532</sup> Boylan demonstrates that women have been socially active since the 1760s and have maneuvered their way into and around the public sphere by using “benevolent”<sup>533</sup> politics, implying they were doing moral and just societal work through the political arena. The only women who entered the realm were of the upper class whom had connections and could achieve their goals, relating to social concerns and improvements. She compares these benevolent workers to the reform organizations that were

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<sup>527</sup> Allgor. “Seneca Falls and the Origins of the Women’s Rights Movement.” 1533-1534.

<sup>528</sup> *Ibid.*, 1533.

<sup>529</sup> Theresia Sauter-Bailliet. “Remember the Ladies”: Emancipation Efforts of American Women from Independence to Seneca Falls.” *European Contributions To American Studies* 14, (March 1988): 271-279. *America: History & Life*, EBSCOhost (accessed November 10, 2014), 278.

<sup>530</sup> *Ibid.*, 274.

<sup>531</sup> *Ibid.*, 276.

<sup>532</sup> Anne M Boylan. “Women and Politics in the Era before Seneca Falls.” *Journal of the Early Republic* 10, no. 3 (Fall 1990): 363-382. *America: History & Life*, EBSCOhost (accessed November 10, 2014), 364.

<sup>533</sup> *Ibid.*, 368.

bolder and did not ask prettily for things, but demanded them. As there had already been women in the shadows of the political world at this time. Reform politics of abolitionists and women's suffragists had a much rougher road in comparison to their more demure counterparts. What critics objected to was not women moving in the shadows of the political realm, as benevolent female activist had already been doing, but those who chose a political style that placed them and their political goals in the light with their male counterparts.<sup>534</sup> They "elicited outraged condemnation because it involved women directly in politics in pursuit of unpopular causes."<sup>535</sup> In looking at both of these styles of women in politics we once again how the construct of Seneca Falls and what "real" females in politics has overshadowed how women were engaging in the political realm prior to that fateful convention. Seneca Falls, according to Boylan, was a culmination of "a decade of discussion concerning acceptable political activities for women."<sup>536</sup> Boylan does make a solid argument for women engaging in politics prior to Seneca Falls. She also makes it clear there were women's organizations working in the social and political realms. But, never once does Boylan mention a convention prior to Seneca Falls. Because of this one could infer that she would still consider it to be the first Women's Rights Convention and thus an important aspect to the movement. However, it definitely not the beginning of women seeking entrance into the political realm.

*History of Woman's Suffrage* was once considered the grand companion to the history of women, until *A Companion to American Women's History* was published in 2002. Chapter eight "Religion, Reform, and Radicalism in the Antebellum Era," written by Nancy A. Hewitt, notes the "decades between the American Revolution and the Civil War have attracted the attention of women's historians since the emergence of the field"<sup>537</sup> The biggest thing to take away from this section is Hewitt discussing the amount of attention given to Seneca Falls and how historians are now moving towards new "path breaking"<sup>538</sup> studies of the time and other groups. This does not downplay the importance of Seneca Falls, but lifts up other groups that pull away from it to create a broader picture of Women's Suffrage beyond Seneca Falls.

As the Seneca Falls Convention clearly dwells within the realm of feminism and is a large part of the development of feminist theory, I also turned to *No Permanent Waves: Recasting Histories of U.S. Feminism*, written in 2010, for an interpretation of the Seneca Falls Convention. Chapter one demonstrates the importance of Seneca Falls to feminism by being fittingly titled "From Seneca Falls to Suffrage? Reimagining a 'Master' Narrative in U.S. 'Women's history'", also written by Nancy A. Hewitt. It uses the same themes founded in *A Companion to American Women's History*. Hewitt calls Stanton and Anthony "Brilliant strategists who recognized the importance of documenting their version of events."<sup>539</sup> Hewitt views Seneca Falls as a critical turning point in the Women's Political Movement but attests to earlier influences before the Convention and calls for a "widening of our lens."<sup>540</sup> That is to say for more scholars to write about other moments in history that capture this idea of women in politics. Hewitt takes it one step further

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<sup>534</sup> Boylan, "Women and Politics in the Era before Seneca Falls," 380.

<sup>535</sup> *Ibid.*, 382.

<sup>536</sup> *Ibid.*, 364.

<sup>537</sup> Nancy A Hewitt. "Religion, Reform, and Radicalism in the Antebellum Era." in *A Companion to American Women's History*. Edited by Nancy A. Hewitt, 117-131. Oxford, UK: Blackwell, 2002, 117.

<sup>538</sup> *Ibid.*, 128.

<sup>539</sup> Nancy A Hewitt. "From Seneca Falls to Suffrage? Reimagining a "Master" Narrative in U.S Women's History" in *No Permanent Waves: Recasting Histories of U.S. Feminism*. Edited by Nancy Hewitt. New Brunswick, N.J: Rutgers University Press, 2010, 15.

<sup>540</sup> *Ibid.*, 21.

acknowledging “scholars of African American, immigrant, and working-class women have detailed the racist, nativist, and elitist tendencies of many white women suffragists.”<sup>541</sup>

After Seneca Falls, we see a division in women’s groups. On the one side there stands a group still fighting for abolition and women’s suffrage side by side. Stanton and Anthony, who after African American men get the vote, decided the only way to get the political equality they desired was to create a book and a movement that was geared towards their race and class. Of all the authors I studied, I found Hewitt to be the one I most closely related to in concerns to my conception of the historiography of Seneca Falls. She considers Seneca Falls Convention to be “only a single thread in a variegated tapestry”<sup>542</sup> that makes up the history of the Women’s Rights Movement and the field of history in general.

Carol Anne Douglas’ article “Seneca Falls Revisited” looks at the Transatlantic History of American Women’s Suffrage and how Stanton and other feminist travelled frequently back and forth between Europe and America. British Contemporaries called them “Transatlantic Amazons”.<sup>543</sup> It is on one of these trips that, according to Stanton, the idea of the Seneca Falls Convention stems from. When she and other women were refused the ability to speak at the London Anti-slavery Convention in 1840, it lit a fire within her and Lucretia Mott to host a Women’s Rights Convention. From this point on Stanton, and later Anthony, would make continuous trips to Europe to meet with other suffrage associations and women’s groups to discuss international feminism. The article also discusses other influences upon Stanton and Mott that you do not hear about in the traditional telling of the Seneca Falls Convention. It discusses how Native American culture influenced Stanton as its social hierarchy places a substantial importance on women and valued them. Mott spent time in the Oneida Community where they believed in equality in all things I speculate that neither of these were included in Stanton’s retelling of the conception of the convention for two reasons. The first is, to use a minority group (such as Native Americans) subjugated by the dominant white population as a model for political and social change would be suicide to their cause. The second is that the Oneida Community was a “free love” community, which goes against Christian and cultural belief of propriety that society had at this time. The take away from this article is it demonstrates history can be objective without establishing an argument. I would place this interpretation of the foundation for the convention in the second group. Though it discusses what the conference was all about it never takes a strong stance of claiming Seneca Falls as a birth place nor a myth to the Women’s Rights Movement.

Jacob Katz Cogan and Lori D. Ginzberg wrote the journal article "1846 petition for woman's suffrage, New York State Constitutional Convention" in 1997. It begins with the traditional outlook of the Seneca Falls Convention and does not deny Seneca Falls as an important event launching the Women’s Right Movement. In this article we see the seeds for Ginzberg’s book *Untidy Origins a story of Woman's Rights in Antebellum New York*, published in 2005. The journal article has similar speculations to those produced in Ginzberg’s book but is vital as it gives her outright opinion on where the Seneca Falls Convention belongs in the timeline of women fighting for political equality. In both the article and Ginzberg’s book we see the story of a group of women who demanded “Equal and civil and political rights with men”<sup>544</sup> in a petition to Jefferson County that happened two summers prior to the Seneca Falls Convention. In the journal

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<sup>541</sup> Hewitt, “From Seneca Falls to Suffrage?,” 16.

<sup>542</sup> Ibid., 32.

<sup>543</sup> Carol Anne Douglas. "Seneca Falls Revisited." *National Women's Studies Association*, 1998, 1.

<sup>544</sup> Lori D Ginzberg. *Untidy Origins a story of Woman's Rights in Antebellum New York* Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005, 7.

article they speculate that “no doubt there are other petitions, perhaps equally elegant, that historians have yet to stumble on.”<sup>545</sup> Demonstrating the key point of *Untidy Origin’s* argument that nothing just “bursts” onto the scene, there are always events that led up to it. Ginzberg suspects the idea of women’s suffrage was more commonly thought of than we have assumed.<sup>546</sup> If one was to dig a little bit deeper into this idea, they could create the argument that the Seneca Falls Convention with all of its hype and legend may have perpetuated the idea that it is where women really first began their fight for political equality. One has to admit that the study of women’s rights does not have a clean and clear picture. That is to say there are other components that “complicate”<sup>547</sup> the view we have of women’s suffrage and its traditional beginning at Seneca Falls. Ginzberg challenges us to understand that Women’s Rights is an idea that extends “a conversation older than the nation itself.”<sup>548</sup> One of those components can be found in Rosemarie Zagari’s book *Revolutionary Backlash: Women and Politics in the Early American Republic*, which much like Ginzberg argues that Seneca Falls was not the beginning of the Women’s Rights Movement.

*Revolutionary Backlash* is a conjectural history that focuses on “moving women from the margins of the history process to the center.”<sup>549</sup> In this book Zagari argues that the beginning of the first women’s rights movement actually began during the American Revolution. She states the book “is a tale about how the Revolution profoundly changed the popular understanding of women’s political status and initiated a widespread, ongoing debate over the meaning of Women’s Rights.”<sup>550</sup> Zagari cites that in New Jersey, 1776, small portions of the state allowed women to vote and argues New Jersey had actually followed revolutionary beliefs to their “logical conclusion.”<sup>551</sup> What comes off unclear in her argument is that she claims the American Revolution is important turning point in political movement for women, but conveys the idea as just happening and women would have always remained unequal with men if it was not for the American Revolution.<sup>552</sup> This assumption does not give enough credit to the American women during the colonial area and possibly too much credit as well. Though Seneca Falls would happen at a much later date, it is still a substantial part of the Women’s Rights Movement and would create a momentum that far surpassed the glacier speed in which women in politics were moving prior to it. Through Zagari’s passionate rendition we can only place her within the third grouping as she makes it abundantly clear that her sole belief is in the idea that the Women’s Rights Movement is launched within the Revolutionary era and makes no real comments about Seneca Falls whatsoever.

A gendered study conducted by James L. Newman, who works within the field of Geography, authored "Becoming the birthplace of women's rights: The transformation of Seneca Falls, New York" in 1992. This is a micro history on the Seneca Falls community who heralds

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<sup>545</sup> Jacob Katz Cogan, and Lori D. Ginzberg. "1846 petition for woman's suffrage, New York State Constitutional Convention." *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture & Society* 22, no. 2: 427. *Humanities International Complete*. 1997. EBSCOhost (accessed November 10, 2014), 438.

<sup>546</sup> Lori D Ginzberg. *Untidy Origins a story of Woman's Rights in Antebellum New York* Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005, 8.

<sup>547</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

<sup>548</sup> *Ibid.*, 27.

<sup>549</sup> Rosemarie Zagari. *Revolutionary Backlash: Women and Politics in the Early American Republic*. Philadelphia: University Of Pennsylvania Press, 2007, 17.

<sup>550</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>551</sup> *Ibid.*, 32.

<sup>552</sup> *Ibid.*, 22.

their town as the birthplace of Women's rights and uses the myth of the Seneca Falls Convention to keep the community financially stable. Newman uses a very basic, traditional outlook upon the convention making clear the community uses the convention to keep its small town relative to history as well as use it for tourism purposes to maintain their economy. By having President Carter sign authorization to establish Women's Rights National Historic Park in Seneca Falls and continuing to host "feminist activity"<sup>553</sup> Seneca Falls keeps the identity that it has constructed for itself based off of the convention. I view this source as a memory history as it conveys that the community put a great deal of emphasis upon the myth of Seneca Falls and its importance in order to use it for tourism purposes. It can also be seen as a gendered study as Newman makes it clear that he believes women must take up the cause if they want more support of this historical landmark to Women's History. Though it appears that Newman falls into the first group, it better supports the third grouping and the idea of the "myth" of Seneca Falls.

To conclude this paper I look to the final source within group three, befittingly titled *The Myth of Seneca Falls Memory and the Women's Suffrage Movement, 1848-1849* written by Lisa Tetrault in 2014. Tetrault argues Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony and Lucretia Mott rearranged and developed the origins story of the Women's Rights Movement around the Seneca Falls Convention to further the aims of the Women's suffrage movement in a time of War and other suffrage movements to strengthen their cause and give it more validity. Tetrault explains, "A Seneca Falls mythology rings true because we have been reading the end of the story back onto the beginning."<sup>554</sup> By creating the history of it this way, these founding women made the chronology of the Women's Movement more difficult to reconstruct therefore effecting the timeline of Women's history ever since. As the myth of Seneca Falls began to become accepted "a sense of order and inevitability" grew as well, even though the nineteenth century was continually changing and developing in regards to women's rights.<sup>555</sup> The argument could be made that Stanton, Anthony, and Mott did what they believed they had to in order to reach their goals of female suffrage. Tetrault examines what the "the myth of Seneca Falls has remained an important rallying point for women's rights work throughout the twentieth century as well as an actor in the ongoing struggle for which it stands."<sup>556</sup> In this statement we see the true power of memory history. One must always recall "memory is made, not found, and what we remember matters",<sup>557</sup> which creates the philosophical question of historiography: can history be objective?

I believe history can be objective. To be so, however, requires the amassing of different interpretations of key events and piecing them together to create a picture of what really took place. Like Hewitt, I view history as a large tapestry on which every interpretation and event adds a thread. "One could anchor the beginning of the women's rights movement in the United States in many events- some before, and some after, Seneca Falls."<sup>558</sup> Because of this there are numerous strands to the Seneca Falls and women's rights movements' picture. To truly understand and appreciate historiography one must have a fluid mindset. Like a continuously changing tapestry the overall picture may not shift greatly but the finer points and even the minutest thread can change color and texture to give a more stirring masterpiece.

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<sup>553</sup> James L Newman. "Becoming the birthplace of women's rights: The transformation of Seneca Falls, New York." *Focus* 42, no. 3 (Fall 1992): 4. *Business Source Elite*, EBSCOhost (accessed November 7, 2014), 4.

<sup>554</sup> Lisa Tetrault. *The Myth of Seneca Falls Memory and the Women's Suffrage Movement, 1848-1849*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2014, 9.

<sup>555</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>556</sup> *Ibid.*, 193.

<sup>557</sup> *Ibid.*, 199.

<sup>558</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.