

## WHY WEST 77th STREET AND CENTRAL PARK WEST?

by Pam Elam, President, Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony Statue Fund Inc.

The ECS and SBA Statue Fund proposed the location at West 77th Street and Central Park West for the statue because that site acts as a gateway to history. Where else in New York City could you find an intersection where statues honoring principal actors in the battles over the 13th, 14th, 15th, and 19th Amendments to the United States Constitution can be found? A statue of President Abraham Lincoln stands on the New York-Historical Society's front steps and a statue of Frederick Douglass stands on the steps at the 77th Street entrance. A statue of President Theodore Roosevelt, on horseback, stands high on the entrance stairs to the American Museum of Natural History.

By including a Central Park statue of Stanton and Anthony in this "Constitution Plaza," an instant history lesson will be created even before visitors enter the New-York Historical Society. The fact that the New-York Historical Society will open a long-awaited Center for the Study of Women's History later this year only increases the importance of telling the whole history of the United States, a history that fully and fairly includes the vast and vital roles women have played in it. Creating the first statue of real women in Central Park will speak volumes to that history as well. With this statue, we will be bringing a significant piece of Women's History to the 40 million people who visit Central Park each year, as well as to all New Yorkers. Stanton and Anthony organized and attended countless conventions, rallies, marches and meetings in New York City during a period that lasted over fifty years. They founded the Women's Loyal National League here in 1863 and were responsible for collecting over 400,000 petition signatures to urge President Abraham Lincoln and the Congress to immediately end slavery through the 13th Amendment. They wrote and published their newspaper, *The Revolution*, here from 1868-70. They founded the National Woman Suffrage Association here in 1869. The list of historical milestones goes on and on. Then add to all this evidence, the historically documented information that Stanton and Anthony lived and worked near Central Park, often took walks and carriage rides through it, and Stanton died in an apartment only blocks away from the Park.

Stanton and Anthony loved Central Park, as the statements below show, and the beauty of the Park provided a welcome respite to them from the never-ending pressures of their battle for equality and justice. From 1862 to 1902, Stanton and

her family lived at four different Westside homes, always with a room for Anthony in each (75 West 45 Street, 464 West 34 Street, 26 West 61 Street, and 250 West 94 Street). In *Harriot Stanton Blatch and the Winning of Woman Suffrage*, on page 20, Dr. Ellen Carol DuBois wrote about Stanton's daughter and the family's move to a new house in 1862: "Elizabeth found a 'nice four story house...high up,' that is, farther north - to rent, so that she and the children could take advantage of Central Park. In the fall and spring they walked and ran; in the winter, they skated." In Stanton's later years, when her health began to fail, Dr. Elisabeth Griffith's book *In Her Own Right - The Life of Elizabeth Cady Stanton* stated, on page 206, that in 1892, "Despite the 'hard work of getting in and out of vehicles,' she took daily drives in Central Park." On November 12, 1893 (her Birthday), Stanton wrote in her diary: "Every pleasant day I take a drive in the park, and indulge in short naps thrown in between my reading and writing." From Volume 2, page 802, of *The Life and Work of Susan B. Anthony*, it is reported that in 1895 Anthony was the guest of her cousin whose home overlooked Central Park: "Mrs. Stanton's cosy flat was on the other side, and through this lovely pleasure ground each bright day, Miss Anthony took her morning walk. When the weather was inclement she was sent in the carriage, and the two old friends talked and worked together as they had done so many times in days gone by."

Those "times in days gone by" included 1848 when Stanton was largely responsible for organizing the nation's First Woman's Rights Convention held in Seneca Falls, New York and bravely stood to propose that women must have the right to vote. Frederick Douglass supported her proposal then but later refused to support the inclusion of all women in the Constitution's 14th and 15th Amendments. Longtime friends and coworkers in the Abolitionist Movement, Stanton, Anthony, and Douglass had worked together for decades to end slavery and to urge President Lincoln to act for immediate and unconditional emancipation of the slaves. The 13th Amendment was finally adopted. But Stanton and Anthony felt betrayed when Douglass and others supported the 14th, and later 15th, Amendments' definition of citizen's rights to include men only. It took 72 years (1848-1920) of fierce struggle for women to win the Right to Vote. As Carrie Chapman Catt wrote on pages 107-108 of her book, *Woman Suffrage and Politics*: "To get the word male in effect out of the constitution cost the women of the country fifty-two years of pauseless campaign thereafter...Hundreds of women gave the accumulated possibilities of an entire lifetime, thousands gave years of their lives, hundreds of thousands gave constant interest and such aid as they could. It was a continuous, seemingly endless, chain of activity. Young suffragists who helped forge the last links of that chain were not born when it began. Old suffragists who forged the first links were dead when it ended."

Neither Stanton nor Anthony lived to see the Woman Suffrage Victory. In 1902, Stanton died in her apartment at 250 West 94th Street, having shortly before written yet another letter urging President Theodore Roosevelt to support Woman Suffrage (with a separate letter to Mrs. Roosevelt). She wrote: "Surely there is no greater monopoly than that of all men, in denying to all women a voice in the laws they are compelled to obey." Roosevelt ignored that last letter, just as he had ignored the many previous messages both Stanton and Anthony had sent to him. The shining monument of Theodore Roosevelt at the front entrance of the American Museum of Natural History reminds us that his "progressive" platform was not expansive enough to include equality for women. Anthony was still attending Woman Suffrage meetings and conventions until shortly before her death in 1906. Her last words in public, when the audience rose to applaud her, were: "There have been others also just as true and devoted to the cause - I wish I could name every one - but with such women consecrating their lives, failure is impossible!" The valiant work of Stanton and Anthony helped change the very definition of "democracy" and their relationship of over fifty years provides a beautiful example of the power of friendship.

Important historical milestones regarding Stanton, Anthony, and Women Suffrage will be celebrated in the near future such as the 200th anniversary of the birth of Elizabeth Cady Stanton in 2015; the New York State Woman Suffrage Centennial in 2017; the 200th Anniversary of the birth of Susan B. Anthony in 2020; and the National Centennial of the Ratification of the 19th Amendment in 2020. By honoring Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony, New York City will also be honoring the biggest nonviolent revolution in the history of this nation - the battle for woman suffrage. And to complete this statue, the names of other women whose work was crucial to the success woman suffrage will be inscribed around its base. They include Sojourner Truth, Lucy Stone, Alice Paul, Lucy Burns, Mary Church Terrell, Carrie Chapman Catt, Anna Howard Shaw, Matilda Joselyn Gage, Ida B. Wells-Barnett, Alva Belmont, Harriot Stanton Blatch, and Alice Stone Blackwell. By having this statue unveiled before 2020, New York City could be in the center of a nationwide celebration of "Votes for Women." New York City has the unique opportunity to make a long-overdue change in the way it recognizes the contributions of women. The creation of the Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony Woman Suffrage statue will be a step in the right direction as this City demonstrates that its public spaces reflect the reality of history and honor the women who helped build this City, State, and Nation.