

Elizabeth Cady Stanton to Give Lecture at LeRoy

by *Lynne Belluscio*

Don't miss this opportunity to hear Melinda Gruber as she portrays Elizabeth Cady Stanton in the back parlor of LeRoy House on Sunday, September 10, at 4 PM. This program is free and open to the public. Melinda has had a very busy schedule this year as New York celebrates the 100th anniversary of women's suffrage.

Growing up in Rochester, I was well aware of the importance of Susan B. Anthony, and had heard of Elizabeth Cady Stanton, but it has only been recently that have I come to appreciate her contributions. Susan B. Anthony may have been a soldier in the fight for women's suffrage, but it was Stanton who orchestrated the events and wrote the words and created the mission.

She was born in Johnstown, New York, on November 12, 1815. She was one of eleven children born to Daniel and Margaret Cady. Five of her siblings died young, and her older brother, Eleazar, died just before he graduated from Union College in Schenectady. Her father was a lawyer who served one term in Congress in Washington – 1814-1817. He was also a circuit judge and in 1847 (the year before the Women's Rights Convention in Seneca Falls) he became a New York Supreme Court judge. It is said that Elizabeth was introduced to the law by her father and they would often debate issues. When her older brother died in 1826, when Elizabeth was eleven, her father exclaimed, "Oh my daughter, I wish you were a boy!" Elizabeth attended school at the Johnstown Academy until she was 16, but unless she attended a female seminary, higher education was not possible. So when she was 16, her family sent her to Emma Willard's Female Seminary in 1830. This would have

a profound effect on Elizabeth, not the least of which was the exposure to the evangelical preaching of Charles Phinney which terrified her. She rejected organized Christianity for the rest of her life. She believed that the subjection of women could be traced to religion and in later life she decided to write the *Woman's Bible*, which was not well accepted by many of her supporters. She wrote: "The religious superstitions of women perpetuate their bondage more than all other adverse influences."

Elizabeth was raised in a family that owned a slave, and in early New York, many people owned slaves, until manumission in 1827. She attended an abolition meeting in England on her honeymoon and along with Lucetia Mott, who was an appointed delegate to the meeting, was barred from attending the meeting because they were women. They were soon joined by William Lloyd Garrison, Elizabeth's cousin, and they protested the meeting. It was at this time, that Elizabeth's commitment to the advancement of women's rights took flight. It continued for the rest of her life until she died in 1902. It would be another 18 years after her death that women gained the right to vote in the United States. Knowing that she would not see the acceptance of suffrage in her lifetime, she said her life was like sowing winter wheat and that others would reap what she and others had sown.

Elizabeth married Henry Brewster Stanton in 1840. Elizabeth requested that the minister omit "promise to obey" because, as she later wrote: "I obstinately refused to obey one with whom I supposed I was entering into an equal relation." He was involved with the temperance movement and abolition. After their marriage he became a lawyer. They had seven



children, the last son, Robert was born when Elizabeth was forty-four. Although she took her husband's surname, she refused to be called Mrs. Henry Stanton and signed her name as Elizabeth Cady Stanton.

One of the more meaningful quotations from Elizabeth Cady Stanton: "The moment we begin to fear the opinions of others and hesitate to tell the truth that is in us, and from motives of policy are silent when we should speak, the divine floods of light and life no longer flow into our souls. Every truth we see is ours to give the world, not to keep for ourselves alone, for in doing we cheat humanity out of their rights and check our own development."

Please plan to join us for a very interesting afternoon, and meet Melinda Gruber as she shares her interpretation of this fascinating woman of our past, who continues to influence our future.

