

Woman's Suffrage and Early Family Letters: To the women members of the Friends of Auburn Heights Preserve, *Happy New Year!* Ten years ago, Ruth and I visited the Woman's Suffrage Museum at Seneca Falls, New York. There, in 1848, was assembled the first important group of prominent American women for the purpose of promoting human rights. Seneca Falls was a strategic manufacturing town (Goulds Pumps are still made there) of the 19th century, midway between the north ends of Seneca and Cayuga Lakes. The small town of Waterloo, about 6 miles to the west, was settled by Philadelphia Quakers, and Quaker women were in the forefront of the struggle for women's rights.

The conference at Seneca Falls was convened in a hurry. Visiting Waterloo from Philadelphia were Lucretia Mott and her husband, James, and she and her female friends in the Quaker community decided it important to attract attention to their mission by holding a national gathering to draw up some principles of action. A 28-year-old housewife from Connecticut named Elizabeth Cady Stanton (who was not a Quaker) had just moved with her husband to a small frame house on the outskirts of Seneca Falls, and she, too, became involved in promoting the conference. From its inception, the whole thing was planned and promoted in 10 days. The black civil rights leader, Frederic Douglass, then a young man himself, was there. James Mott agreed to chair the two-day event, as the women knew if their resolves were to carry any weight, they would need the backing of a masculine leader. Susan B. Anthony, long associated with the woman's suffrage movement of the 19th century, was not there; she did not come on the scene until the 1850s. She and Mrs. Stanton worked tirelessly together on many issues but became estranged near the ends of their lives about 1900. In 1920, 72 years after the Seneca Falls conference, American women first voted in a presidential election, but it all started in that little town in upstate New York.

In the long process of "cleaning out" from Auburn Heights, which is just beginning, I have uncovered some family letters of 100 years ago, written mostly to my grandmother, Elizabeth Mitchell Marshall (1854–1930). Some were from her mother, Hannah Mitchell, who lived less than 5 miles away (Woodside Farm), and some from her son Warren traveling to the West Coast and to Germany, a completely new experience for him and for the Marshall family of those days. It seems the local letters centered on family illnesses, as I suppose there was not much other news except the weather, and what seem like simple illnesses now could be very serious in 1900. Typhoid fever was mentioned, and the "grip" was prevalent, sometimes bordering on pneumonia. My great-grandmother Hannah, writing in 1912 two years before her death, apologized for her shaky handwriting, but it was straight and beautiful by today's standards. The purpose of Uncle Warren's trip to California was to propose to Bertha Lamborn, and it must have been successful as he and Aunt Bertha were married in the front hall at Auburn Heights, June 26, 1907. The purpose of his trip to Germany (Hamburg and Berlin in 1909) was to buy rags and sell vulcanized fibre for the new National Fibre and Insulation Company of Yorklyn. By handwritten letters, he gave his father, Israel, complete reports on his progress. He was rewarded, as in a letter to his wife Bertha, he said "Father says we can have some more cinders for our driveway." Saved also at Auburn Heights were many wedding invitations of the early 20th century. I must speed up the perusal if we are to vacate by late in 2008!